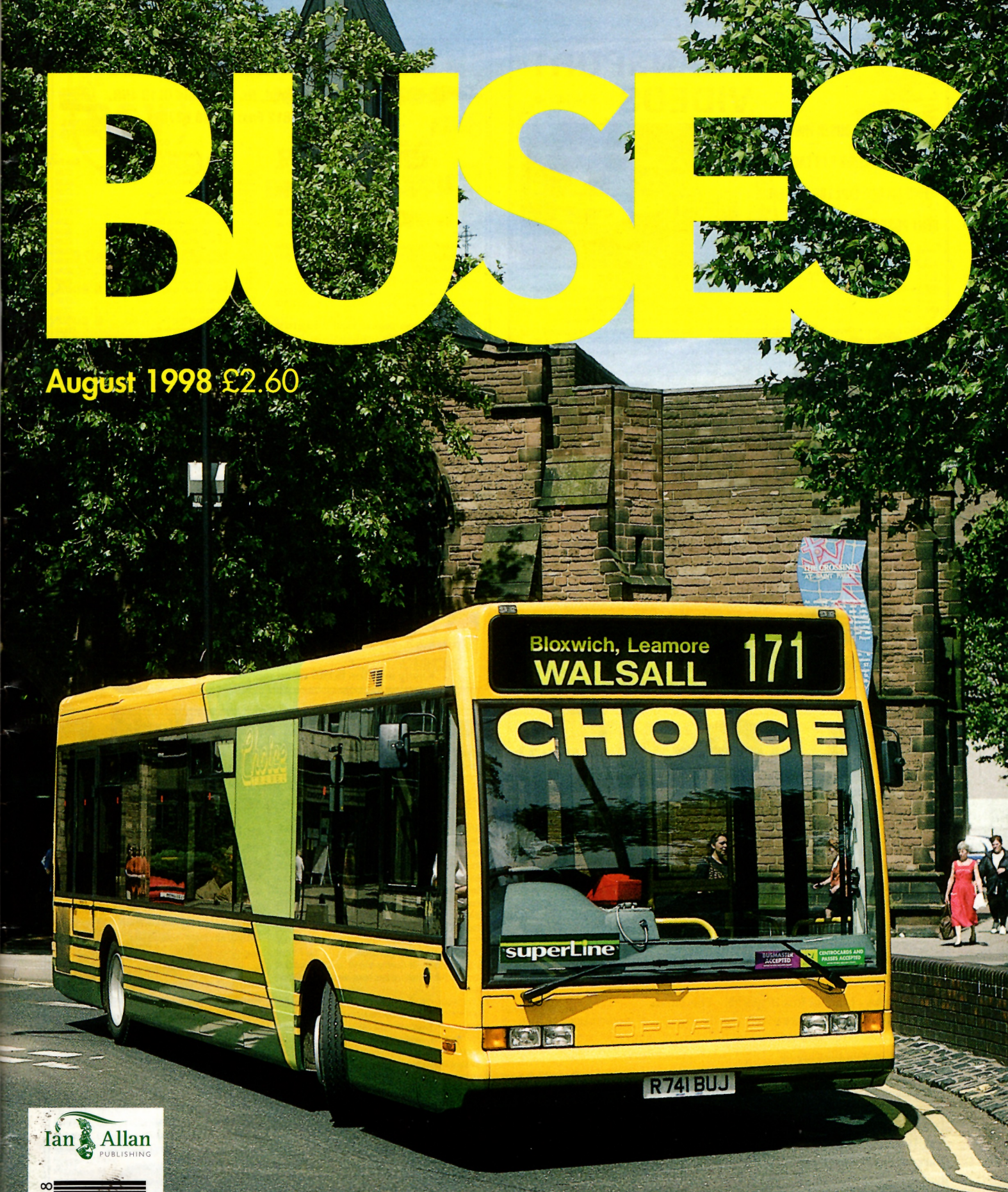
BUSES

August 1998 £2.60



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634. South Wales, UK Buses June 1998 (Dig). A 60 minute programme by Dave Spencer starting in Newport then on to Caerphilly, Blackwood Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd. Developments include Stagecoach Rhondda.

633. South Wales, UK Buses (Dig). A 60 minute feature by Dave Spencer with scenes in Cardiff in May 1997 and June 98, then in contrast the 1998 Bus & Coach Wales Rally at Barry Island with buses on the road.

632. AEC Rally, May 98 Buses & Trucks (Dig). The annual AEC society rally with lorries and buses passing through the parade ring in good sunny weather, on site commentary. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer

631. Coaching Holiday, UK Coaches, 16mm Cine. Starts with 10 minute Greenslades in house film made 1959. The next section early 1960s BTF film about Tilling coach holidays, 20 mins., then final section National Bus Co. 1970s film about coach holiday in South West ,30 mins., not much coach content in latter.

630. North Wales, UK Buses (Dig). Filmed Nov. '97 and May '98. We start with winter scenes in Wrexham, includes Father Christmas parade! Then Mold again end Nov. In May '98 sunshine we start at Rhyl then to Llandudno and end at Bangor. Introduction of Arriva livery in 1998 scenes.

629. Heart of the Pennines, UK Bus Rally (Dig). The 1998 Spring rally where we watch the vehicles arriving at the Piece Hall, Halifax, then we walk the entire route up to the Stone Chair filming as we travel!

628. South West England, UK Buses 1997-98)Dig). A variety of locations, Tavistock, Exmouth and Barnstaple in Devon summer '97 then Camborne, Redruth, Truro and Bodmin in Cornwall Spring '98 and second half covers the 1998 Poole running day in pouring rain with arrival at the rally and free bus service.

627. Cornwall, UK Buses April 1998 (Dig). 60 mins. filmed by Dave Spencer in April 1998 with glorious Spring sunshine, starting at Truro then on to Falmouth, Penzance and then Camborne/Redruth.

626. Bournemouth, UK Buses April 1998 (Dig). 60 mins. filmed by Dave Spencer in Spring sunshine. After scenes around the town centre. We move on to Poole for more Wilts and Dorset views at the bus station.

624. Cyprus, Buses April 1998 (Dig). 60 mins. by Dave Spencer in scorching Spring sunshine and scenes taken in Limasol, Nicosia and Paphos. Many old Bedford 'village' buses now derelict in the countryside.

611. Malta, Buses February 1998 (Dig). The final volume of four which provides extensive clear coverage of vehicles in service but remember many more including old favourites are still being rebuilt. The 'Swiss post bus livery' is popular amongst drivers although vehicles look strange without the trimming!

603. Myanmar (Burma), Buses January 1998 (Dig). The elderley allied trucks which were left after the war still provides the backbone of service in Yangon (Rangoon) and Mandeley. Also a multitude of ex Japanese and Korean buses themselves often many years old. Mainly Right Hand Drive as UK.

601. Hong Kong, China Buses December 1997 (Dig). The second volume dedicated to buses in Hong Kong takes us to Kowloon and the KMB fleet featuring clear scenes at the Star Ferry terminal passing around Kowloon to include Nathan Rd. and concluding at Kowloon Tong rail station. 60 mins. by Dave Spencer

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ORIGINAL OMNIBUS CO 1998 RELEASES
JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1998

Cat No.	Available	Price
FOCUS ON BLACKPOOL		
43509	Blackpool Balloon Tram - 1990s Livery ..... July	£14.99
NEW		
43508	Blackpool Balloon Tram - Wall's Ice Cream ... Aug	£17.50
42605	Bedford OB Coach - Seagull Coaches ..... Aug	£11.50
NEW		
43008	Leyland Olympian/ECW - Blackpool Transport Sept	£12.50
STAGECOACH BUSES		
43009	Leyland Olympian/ECW - Stagecoach United Counties ..... Jul	£12.50
42719	Van Hool Alizee - Stagecoach East Kent ..... July	£13.50
NEW		
43305	Plaxton Premiere - Stagecoach Western ..... Aug	£13.50
43112	Stagecoach Red/White	£12.50
CELTIC COLLECTION		
1998 CASTING		
43703	Q1 Trolleybus - Glasgow Corporation Transport July	£13.50
FOCUS ON WALES		
1998 CASTING		
43704	AEC 6641T Trolleybus - Cardiff Corp Transport Sept	£13.50
LONDON SCENE		
42909	Optare Delta - Westlink ..... Aug	£12.50
43604	Northern Counties Palatine II - Uxbridge Buses Aug	£12.50
INDEPENDENTS		
1998 CASTING		
43405	Plaxton Beaver 2 - Trent Buses ..... Sept	£11.50
1998 CASTING		
43305	Northern Counties Palatine II - Capital Citybus Sept	£12.50
FIRST GROUP		
1998 CASTING		
43404	Plaxton Beaver 2 - PMT ..... July	£11.50
42812	Dennis Dart - Brewers ..... July	£12.50

OOC SALE
Some you may have missed

		Sale Price
40205	Leyland Leopard, Ballykissangel	£7.99
40308	Burlingham Seagull Ribble	£9.99
40602	Leyland PS1, Isle of Man	£7.99
41801	Leyland, Ribble Breakdown	£9.99
42505	Bedford OB 1/4 lights, Malta	£7.99
42703	Van Hool Alizee Bus, Eireann	£8.99
42705	Van Hool Alizee, OK Travel	£8.99
42706	Van Hool Alizee, Bakers Dolphin	£8.99
42709	Van Hool Alizee, Eavesway Travel	£8.99
42710	Van Hool Alizee, Railair	£8.99
42711	Van Hool Alizee, Speedlink	£8.99
42803	Dennis Dart, City Bus Standard	£9.99
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97096	Capital and Highlands Set	£15.99
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97130	AEC Reliance, Oxford City	£7.99
97811	Trolleybus, Notts and Derby	£8.99
97813	Weymann Trolleybus, Brighton	£8.99
97837	Leyland PD1A, North Western	£8.99
97838	Leyland PS1. Birch Bros	£7.99
97839	Leyland PD1. Eastern Counties	£7.99
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97855	Bristol L, United Auto Services	£7.99
97858	Bristol K, Caledonian	£7.99
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97669	Bristol L, Lincolnshire	£7.99
97900	AEC Reliance, Devon General	£7.99
97902	AEC Reliance, PMT	£7.99
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97905	Leyland Leopard, Safeway	£7.99
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Palatine 11 - Cityline	£12.50
Plaxton Beaver - Eastern National	£11.50
Bedford OB - Grey-Green	£11.50
Blackpool Balloon Tram (1934 Livery)	£14.95
Palatine 11 - Blackpool Transport	£12.50
MAY	
Plaxton Excalibur - Wallace Arnold	SOLD OUT
Plaxton Premiere - Flightlink	£13.50
Optare Delta - Stagecoach East London	£12.50
Leyland Olympian - Go Coastline	£12.50
Blackpool Balloon Tram - All Over Advert - Empire Pools	£14.95
JUNE	
Leyland Lynx - Crosville	£12.50
BUT 9641T Trolleybus - Belfast Corp.	£13.50
Leyland Lynx - United	£12.50
Van Hool Alizee - Scottish Citylink	£12.50
JULY	
Blackpool Balloon Tram - 1990's Livery	£14.95
Leyland Olympian - Stagecoach United Counties	£12.50
Van Hool Alizee - Stagecoach East Kent	£12.50
Plaxton Premiere - National Express	£13.50
Q1 Trolleybus - Glasgow Corp.	£13.50
Plaxton Beaver 2 -PMT	£11.50
AUGUST	
Blackpool Balloon Tram - All Over Advert - Walls Ice Cream £17.95	
Bedford OB Coach - Seagull Coaches	£11.50
Van Hool Alizee Coach - Seagull Coaches	£12.50
Plaxton Premiere - Stagecoach Western	£13.50
Optare Delta - Westlink	£12.50
Palatine 11 - Uxbridge Buses	£12.50
Dennis Dart - Brewers - All Over Advert - RAF Red Arrows Display Team)	£12.50
SEPTEMBER	
Leyland Olympian - Blackpool Transport	£12.50
AEC 6641T Trolleybus - Cardiff Corp.	£13.50
Plaxton Beaver 2 - Trent Buses	£11.50
Palatine 11 - Capital Citybus	£12.50
Van Hool Alizee - Eavesway	£12.50
OOC Catalogue - April-June 1998 £0.75	
OOC Catalogue - July-Sept. 1998 £0.75	

EFE RELEASES MAY-AUGUST 1998

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BET Style Bus - Halifax Corp.	£11.50
Bristol VRT Series 2 Open-Top - South'n National	£11.50
Leyland Atlantean/MCW - Devon General	£11.50
Daimler CVG6 - West Bromwich	£11.50
Ergo Flatbed with chains - Federation Brewery	£11.50
AEC Routmaster RM277 - London General	£11.50
JUNE	
Mercedes-Benz/Reeve Burgess Minibus - Wstrn National	£11.50
Dennis Dart/Plaxton - County Bus (Lea Valley)	£11.50
Alexander Y Type - East Yorkshire (National Express)	£11.50
Daimler Fleetline /MCW - Birmingham City	£11.50
AEC RF - LT (Red) Route 206	£11.50
Leyland PD2 Highbridge - Great Yarmouth	£11.50
Leyland PD2/12 Orion De-Luxe - Bolton	£11.50
Ergo 3 Axle Box Van - BRS	£11.50
JULY	
Mercedes-Benz/Reeve Burgess (Low Roof Box) - Brewers	£11.50
Leyland Atlantean/MCW - Plymouth	£11.50
BET Style Bus - Western Welsh	£11.50
Bristol VRT Series 2 Open-Top - Eastern Counties	£11.50
AEC/Duple 1/2 Cab Coach - East Yorkshire	£11.50
Plaxton Panorama Elite - Wallace Arnold	£11.50
AEC Regal Bus - British Railways	£11.50
Bedford TK Flatbed - Courage	£11.50
AUGUST	
Bristol Re-United	£11.50
Mercedes-Benz Hoppa - Badgerline	£11.50
Bristol VRT - Blue Bus Gt Yarmouth	£11.50
Bristol VRT - Blue Bus Gt Yarmouth (Showbus Adverts)	£12.50
AEC Routemaster - GM Buses	£11.50
Alexander Y Type - Sheffield Corp	£11.50
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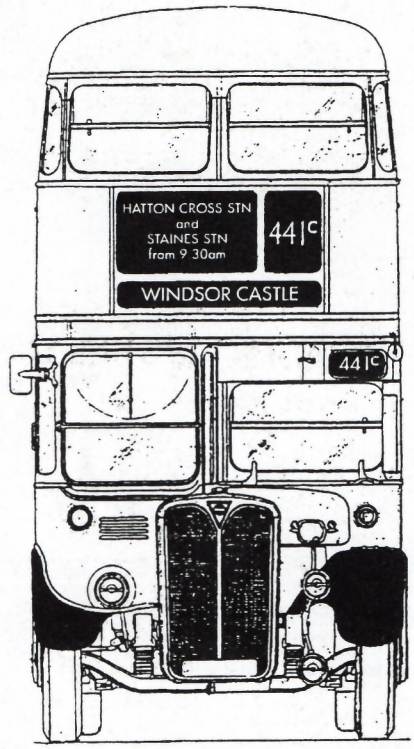

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Premiere, National Express	£13.50
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August

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Leyland Olympian, Wear	£11.50
Leyland PD, A1	£11.00
Leyland PD1A, Eastern Counties	£11.00
Leyland PS1, Birch	£11.00
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Leyland PS1, Western Welsh	£11.00
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Neath bus station provides the setting for this view of First Cymru 383 (M997 CYS), a WS Wessex II-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D in Timecutter livery. The vehicle was purchased from Pullman, Crofty in 1995.
T. S. POWELL

BUSES

VOLUME 50
N0 521
August 1998

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Cover:
Choice Travel is sharing the Walsall Showcase with Travel West Midlands, and has bought four Optare Excels for its 171 service to Mossley. R741 BUJ is seen in Walsall on 19 June.
CHRIS MORRISON

REGULARS

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PHILIP LAMB

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The bus industry has had its traumas in recent years one way or another. Now, it seems, there may be light at the end of the tunnel — though that tunnel gets ever longer, as we're now well into summer and still haven't seen last spring's White Paper!

But while the climate looks set fair for the future, the industry still needs to get its act together and produce a more consistent level of quality (not the lowest common denominator, either!) before ridership can be expected to increase in a meaningful way.

One of the obstacles to be overcome is driver shortage; we felt it first to the west of London, as the economy picked up and other jobs became available, but now it is widespread — few parts of the country are not feeling the pinch, and operators which had worked hard to improve reliability are now having to cut services in the light of driver shortages.

Again in West London, Capital Logistics was not very popular with other operators when it broke rank and gave drivers a better deal. But wage rates for drivers are pathetic, and there are few perks to the job. Buses may not be so demanding to drive these days (the Optare Solo we've found to be an absolute cracker in this respect) but the job itself is. Who would willingly spend 10 hours or more a day driving back and forth in modern traffic conditions, having to deal with the public, keep to time and all the rest of it for half the money somebody maybe in the same organisation is paid for sitting in an isolated train cab with his hand on the regulator?

It's all a vicious spiral. Treat drivers like dirt (which they have been in recent years) and you can't expect them to respect your customers, with whom they are the company's interface. And cut services, and those customers who generate the income that pays the driver — and, increasingly, the shareholders — will go away. The shortage of drivers could well be the factor which kills off the fragile growth in passengers of the last year or two, and needs serious attention.

STEPHEN MORRIS

NEWS

THE MONTH'S CURRENT ISSUES *around the industry*

VOLVO TO END BUS PRODUCTION IN BRITAIN

Volvo Bus Corporation is in the process of restructuring its European production, part of which is to be concentrated on its plant in Wroclaw, Poland, which is receiving an investment totalling 400 million Swedish kroner (£30 million) and will have an annual capacity of 1,100 complete vehicles and 1,400 bus and coach chassis.

An official statement said that Volvo Bus has decided to 'concentrate part of its European bus production for the markets of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe' on Wroclaw, though a company spokesman said that the forthcoming low-floor double-decker could be built either at Borås, in Sweden, or at Wroclaw. Production of it will, however, begin next year at Irvine, which currently builds the Olympian, B6 and some B10Ms, even though Volvo is set to end bus production there in mid-2000, with up to 250 job losses.

Wroclaw will also replace the former Steyr plant in Vienna and the plant at Heilbronn, Germany, which came with the Drogmüller business. Some 400 employees will be affected by these closures. The Finnish factory at Vanda is also under threat.

Volvo chief executive Leif Johnsson said, 'The decision to concentrate production to Poland is fully in line with Volvo's strategy to increase industrial efficiency and to strengthen our presence in this part of Europe'. Production of buses at the new plant at Wroclaw, which currently has a capacity of 300 buses and 2,000 trucks, is due to begin in January and reach full capacity by 2001. Bus production staff there are to increase from 300 to 1,500.

Volvo's UK presence began in 1972, when it acquired its truck importer, Ailsa Trucks and bought the Irvine factory, a former Royal Ordnance depot, in 1973, to build the Volvo-powered Ailsa double-decker. Bus production halted there in 1987, when the mid-engined Citybus model was built instead at Borås as a more standardised B10M derivative — Irvine then concentrated on truck production — and the following year Volvo acquired Leyland Bus.

Volvo built B10Ms at the Leyland plant in Workington from 1990, but in December 1991 announced Workington, Leyland's last remaining factory, would close. Olympian production moved to Irvine in January 1993, and B6 and some B10M production has also been undertaken there ever since.

The end of bus production at Irvine will leave only one British bus chassis manufacturer, Dennis, though Optare of course also builds integral vehicles.

SHAKE UP AT ARRIVA

Arriva — the third largest of the big three bus groups — is selling off one of the other arms of its multi-faceted business to 'focus its activities substantially upon public transport services'.

Arriva Automotive Solutions, the car leasing business formerly known as Cowie Interleasing, is to be separated and either floated off or sold to a trade buyer. This fast-expanded division used to be one of the Arriva's star performers, but an industry-wide fall in used car values is depriving it of the profit levels the City had come to expect. The group issued a profits warning in June that this year's leasing division profits will be down by around £7.5 million.

The group has indicated that it wants to use some of the expected £200 to £400 million proceeds from the sale to expand Arriva Passenger Services beyond its present mix of British, Danish and Dutch bus operations.

While Arriva — the most profitable motor dealer group in the country, thanks to the combination of its activities including buses — says its 33 car dealerships are trading in line with expectations, there has been some possibly wild speculation in the City that they might also be sold and, indeed, that the bus operations might be attractive to one of the smaller listed groups with a consistently higher share value.

A more pressing problem for Arriva is the succession at the top. Group managing director Michael Gwilt, heir apparent to 67-year-old chief executive Gordon Hodgson, has resigned following the decision to quit the leasing market. The previous heir apparent also left the group.

LONDON & COUNTRY 'ARRIVA-ISED'

London & Country Ltd was finally renamed Arriva Croydon & North Surrey Ltd on 10 June, while its subsidiary Guildford & West Surrey, which runs some one-time Alder Valley services as well as former London & Country ones, is now a separate Arriva company, Arriva Guildford & West Surrey Ltd.

EYMS ORDERS VOLVOS

EYMS Group has ordered 15 new Volvo Olympians with Northern Counties bodywork for delivery in October. The order, worth £1.8 million, is the largest placed by EYMS with a single supplier and will replace older buses at Hull. Hull is also to receive 10 Optare Excels. This year EYMS has spent £3.7 million on new buses; in addition to the new buses for Hull there are five Excels for Scarborough plus a 21-seat luxury coach for Finglands, while Hull is also receiving nine Mercedes Varios. A further £1 million is being spent on recent secondhand vehicles, including 10 Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympians from Eastbourne.

Meanwhile the Godfrey Burley Group, which split out from EYMS last year, has won a taxi contract with The Royal Hull Hospitals NHS Trust, to provide taxi services and also transport of staff, specimens, blood and blood plasma etc. GB Taxis was formed last December and is based in Beverley. It has increased its fleet to 16.

MTL SELL OFF BEGINS

Indication that MTL has given up hope of a floatation and will instead be selling up came in early July with the news that its London business had been sold to neighbouring Metroline.

Metroline itself, originally a management buyout from London Buses, was floated last August and remained much the smallest publicly-quoted bus company. It was widely predicted that it would have to expand to keep shareholders happy, and apart from a few small-scale acquisitions had not moved in this direction. MTL's London business, which began as the acquisition of London Northern from London Buses and has since taken over London Suburban Buses and R&I's bus business, has almost doubled Metroline's size and share of the London bus market.

The deal is worth £41.9 million and increases Metroline's share of the London bus market from 7% to 13%. Metroline intends to keep MTL's three garages at Holloway, North Acton and Potters Bar open.

MTL currently retains its Merseyside bus operations and two rail franchises, Merseyrail and Northern Spirit, the recently renamed Regional Railways North East. MTL's chairman Peter Coombs has apparently not ruled out the possibility of floating the remaining business, but there is widespread speculation that they would be sold to other transport groups.

STAGECOACH BUYS INTO VIRGIN

Stagecoach is to expand its presence in the railway business by taking a 49% share of Virgin Rail. Virgin was contemplating a floatation of Virgin Rail, which is largely owned by venture capitalists. However the £158 million deal with Stagecoach, which includes the repayment of £20 million debt, enables Virgin to increase its shareholding to 51%, giving it control of the business, while Stagecoach takes over the venture capital holding. Stagecoach is paying £108 million in cash, and is issuing shares to venture capital interests in respect of the other £50 million.

Stagecoach won only one major franchise, South West Trains, in the original rail privatisation, having been expected to win more, though it also gained the smallest franchise, Island Line on the Isle of Wight. Subsequently it bought the Porterbrook rolling stock leasing company. Virgin runs the West Coast Main Line, one of the largest franchises in Britain, and also the CrossCountry franchise which operates countrywide, using Birmingham as a hub, though with core routes radiating from Manchester, Sheffield, Reading and Bristol. Both franchises run until 2015 and substantial investment is being made in new rolling stock to reduce journey times significantly.

Despite having encountered difficulties with the operation, not least as a result of ageing rolling stock, Virgin has achieved a growth of 12% on West Coast Main Line and 6% on CrossCountry.

Mike Kinski, Stagecoach Group chief executive, is to join the board of Virgin Rail on completion of the deal, which is subject to agreement by OPRAF and the Rail Regulator.

One of the most unusual vehicles to have been repainted in Arriva livery is TOJ 592S, the prototype MCW Metrobus which was rebuilt and put back into service by Stevensons in 1991. The 20-year-old bus is numbered 2080 and continues to be based at Burton-on-Trent. DAVID J. STANIER

OPTARE GOES GREEN

Optare is now offering a catalytic converter on its Solo and Excel integral models. The catalyst is offered as a combined package with the stainless steel silencer, is fitted on-line rather than as a retrofit and is supplied by US catalyst suppler Engine Control Systems in conjunction with Wasey Exhausts. The unit is self regenerating and therefore maintenance free, does not rely on low-sulphur diesel and can operate at low temperatures. This last is important for a service bus, as stop-start work does not always result in a high exhaust temperature. It reduces particulates by up to 50% and carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons by 90%. It can also reduce nitrous oxides.

Wilts & Dorset's 85 Solos are being fitted with the new unit, as are Travel London's 21 Excels currently under delivery.

Optare currently has a record order book, not least due to almost 300 Solos, worth £18 million, having been ordered and, as reported on page 22, is currently recruiting an additional 40 workers, which will bring its workforce up to 435, its largest ever. It expects to supply a record 500 complete vehicles in 1998.

SUPREME TO CONTINUE

Supreme Coaches of Coventry is to continue following the death of its founder Ron Bonas (*Buses* June refers). Although the vehicles were sold to Bob Vale Sales and forward work passed to De Courcey Travel, Ron Bonas's eldest daughter, Pat Allen, who had run the company after her father's death, has decided to buy back one of the coaches, a Bova Futura FLD, and set up her own operation under the Supreme Coaches name.

FACING UP TO FACT

The Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT) has introduced a new scheme whereby coaches will have to display a FACT Accredited sticker to be able to show videos on coaches. FACT represents all major film studios who are determined to prosecute coach operators which show unlicensed videos. A central database has been established to keep track of operators holding licences. Licences from the Performing Rights Society and similar bodies cover only the right to play music on coaches.

IN BRIEF

Mainline shareholders were expected to accept the offer from FirstGroup to buy the Sheffield-based business at an extraordinary general meeting on 9 July.

AVE Berkhof has appointed N. L. Walling of Preston as a sub-agent. Wallings will hold Berkhof parts in stock and will undertake warranty work and repairs on vehicles in the north of England.

A. Mayne & Son is the first operator in Greater Manchester to convert to ultra-low-sulphur Citydiesel supplied by CPL Industries. Citydiesel contains 90% less sulphur than standard diesel.

Travel Merry Hill, the Dudley-based subsidiary of Travel West Midlands which was taken over last year, has moved to a new 2.5acre depot at Pensnett. Travel Merry Hill runs 49 buses, of which 16 have been new since TMW took over. The new depot, which has room for further expansion, is equipped with a Britannia Streamline drive-through bus wash, the 15th Britannia bus wash ordered by Travel West Midlands.

Meanwhile Zaks Bus & Coach Services, which runs 40 buses in the Wolverhampton area has also moved to a new depot, on a 3.5acre site at Great Barr. Two new DiPTAC-spec Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes Varios have been added to the fleet for Centro contracts, with three more to come.

Another West Midlands independent to modernise is Ludlows of Halesowen, which has taken five ex-rental and one new Dennis Dart SLFs from Arriva Bus & Coach. The new one and four of the ex-rental vehicles have Wright Crusader bodywork, the other a Plaxton Pointer. Andy Ludlow was concerned that the Ministry would put its Leyland Nationals off the road; although they have been refurbished, re-engined, retrimmed etc 'it's come to the stage that any National, no matter how well it's maintained, is a prime target for Ministry inspections', he said. Ludlows has one other Dart, bought new in 1990.

London United Busways has won back the Surrey County Council/Heathrow contract to run the 555 group of services, described in *Buses* April. The contract is renewed from August, and LUB will replace existing vehicles with air-conditioned, low-floor Dennis Darts when it can obtain them.

DIARY DATES

1/2 August:
Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre Transport Experience at Mere Way, Ruddington, near Nottingham (details on 0115 940 5705).

West Somerset Railway third Classic Bus running weekend, Bishops Lydeard.

Routemaster Operators & Owners Association display of Routemasters at the Steam & Country Show at Lingfield, Surrey.

28-30 August:
International Oldtimer Bus & Coach Rally, Diepenbeek, province of Limburg, Belgium. Entries welcome from all over Europe. Details: Rik Vanheusden, IOBCR Secretary, Reizen de Zigeuner, Industrielaan 7, B-3590 Diepenbeek, Belgium, tel 00 32 11 350404, fax 00 32 11 331271, E-mail de.zigeuner.@skynet.be.

29/30 August:
Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond, Fife, open weekend. Details: Eddie Taylor on 01383 720241.

NEW VEHICLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The Department of the Environment, Transport & the Regions has announced its new vehicle registration system to replace the current year prefix system which, following the introduction of two prefix changes per year from 1999, expires in September 2001.

The new layout, to use the official demonstration model, is to be ABC 12 DE, where the first three letters are effectively random groups, the numeric digits are to identify dates (though quite how this works has not been explained), and the final two letters relate to geographical region. These regions appear not to have been defined yet, but involve a 'new, more easily recognisable code', and will therefore no doubt differ from the current LVLO letters, though that system is becoming less and less consistent. The new system is still under consultation with the police, and may be changed before implementation.

The Government is also working on a mandatory standard typeface for all number plates.

GAS FOR HOLLAND

The Dutch Government has decided that half of all buses entering public service in Holland from 2002 should be gas powered. The policy was agreed by a consortium comprising the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Transport, the Environment and MOBIS, the bus operators' association in Holland. The policy, which encompasses city and inter-urban buses, will be introduced progressively at the rate of 10% per year with immediate effect. LPG is already a common alternative to diesel in Holland.

Meanwhile Guide Friday has converted three open top Bristol VRTs in York to LPG, supplied by Calor Autogas, bringing the total number of LPG buses in its fleet to 16. The others run in Edinburgh, Stratford and Dublin.

The London Borough of Sutton has more than 60 natural-gas-powered vehicles in service and the largest CNG station in Britain has been opened in the borough.

BUS PEOPLE

We are very sorry to have to record the death of **Jack Mulley** at the age of 88. Jack Mulley started his bus business at Ixworth, Suffolk, in March 1939 with a Gilford 20-seater. The business expanded during the war years, with more Gilfords and a pair of Chevrolets. A new Bedford OWB was allocated in 1943. He acquired Cross Safety Coaches in 1950 and Combs Coaches of Stowmarket in 1957 followed by Robinson of Stowmarket and Jollys Norton. He also acquired the yard and some work of Corona Coaches when it went into liquidation.

Jack Mulley was a keen Gilford enthusiast and preservationist, who also had a reputation for storing withdrawn vehicles, though auctioned his collection in 1975. He was something of an eccentric character, often seen in worn clothing and odd shoes. He retired in 1981 and sold Mulley's Motorways to Roy Munson.

Dr Pierre Laconte, secretary general of UITP (Union Internationale des Transports Publics), stepped down in June after 15 years in the post. **Hans Rat**, director of VSN Groep in Holland and already active in UITP, has taken over. Dr Laconte is continuing with UITP as advisor for external affairs to president Jean Paul Bailly, who is president and director general of RATP, Paris. UITP has 1,700 members in 60 countries.

GLASGOW OFFICIAL ATLANTEAN FAREWELL

An historic occasion was celebrated on 6 June when the last First Glasgow Leyland Atlanteans officially ran in service. Unofficially, some are still running, and *Buses* will commemorate them properly when the last one really has run (like we did with Bristol's Bristol VRs, and some of those are still running four years later!). The commemoration involved running Glasgow's first Atlantean, LA1, which was new with Alexander bodywork in 1958 and is now in the Glasgow Museum of Transport, in service between Drumoyne and Balornock, on which LA1 first ran 40 years ago. It was joined by much newer LA1285 of 1979 and LA1440/8, new in October 1981. Sadly, due to a mix up, LA1449, numerically the last Glasgow Atlantean, got broken up recently.

Passengers were issued with certificates, and raised £500 for the Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice.

Preserved former Glasgow Corporation Leyland Atlantean LA1 (FYS 998), new in 1958, was put into service by First Glasgow on 6 June to commemorate the official end of 40 years' Atlantean service in the city. STEWART J. BROWN

LOW-FLOOR IN OXFORD

Oxford Bus Company has placed 10 Wright Crusader-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs in service on route 13, which links the City Centre with the John Radcliffe Hospital. The dual-door vehicles, which seat 30, have the centre entrance sited as far back as possible — the seating opposite is therefore situated on a footstool. Wheelchair space and three tip-up seats are provided.

Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxford Bus Company believe that route 13 is an ideal choice for low-floor buses, as it carries a high proportion of elderly, infirm and disabled passengers. Of the 51 stops on the route 20 are being provided with Kassel kerbs.

Oxford Bus Company plans to continue to place low-floor buses in service. In addition to a number of Volvo B10BLEs expected to enter service early next year, the company has a total of 27 Alexander-bodied Dennis Tridents on order to update its cross-city Park & Ride services. These vehicles will almost certainly be the first low-floor double-deckers in service outside London. Apart from being dual-door, they will be fitted with spiral (not straight) staircases, will also have a wheelchair space and tip-up seats and are expected to be H47/23D.

One of Oxford Bus Company's new dual door Wright Crusader-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs. PHILIP LAMB

HUNTINGDON & DISTRICT

Premier Buses has been renamed and rebranded again, as JOHN ROBINSON reports

On 10 May Blazefield Group's Premier Buses operation in Huntingdon was rebranded Huntingdon & District, using an attractive new livery of blue and cream with red lining. The first of eight new Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLEs entered service on this date, whilst many of the existing fleet appeared with Huntingdon & District vinyls.

Huntingdon's main operator, it will be recalled, was United Counties, but the acquisition of the neighbouring Cambus Holdings, which included Milton Keynes Citybus, by Stagecoach, owner of United Counties, meant that the large group had to sell Huntingdon, and Milton Keynes, to satisfy the Monopolies & Mergers Commission. They passed to Julian Peddle, then Blazefield Group member Sovereign Bus & Coach, based in Stevenage, purchased MK Metro's Huntingdon operation from him at the end of January 1998. The Milton Keynes-based MK Metro operation was not affected.

Quick transformation

Within days of this change of ownership, a number of vehicles from other Blazefield subsidiaries began to appear in Huntingdon, replacing elderly Bristol VRs which Premier had inherited with the purchase of the Stagecoach United Counties' Huntingdon operations in April 1997. Amongst vehicles transferred to Huntingdon & District were a Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount coach from Harrogate & District, a Yorkshire Coastliner Mercedes-Benz minibus, as well as vehicles from Sovereign itself including further Mercedes-Benz minibuses, Leyland Lynxes and Leyland Olympians with both ECW and Roe bodywork.

This purchase represents the fifth change in ownership of the operation based at the town's Stukeley Road garage since 1952. In that year Eastern National's Midland operations, which included Huntingdon, were transferred to sister Tilling Group company, United Counties, which continued to run the operation, latterly as a National Bus Company subsidiary, until shortly after deregulation. In November 1987, United Counties was purchased by Stagecoach and continued to operate from Stukeley Road until April 1997, when it was forced to sell the Huntingdon operation. The fleet acquired by Premier was largely double-deck, comprising an assortment of Bristol VRs and six Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians The single-deck fleet comprised five 1994 Alexander-bodied Volvo B6s — the newest vehicles transferred.

Premier introduced a livery of yellow and dark blue, although it was several weeks before the first vehicle, a Volvo B6 received the livery. Repainting was a very protracted process, and whilst all the B6s were eventually repainted, none of the Huntingdon-based double-deckers ever received the new colours, although most received Premier Buses vinyls on their Stagecoach livery.

The investment of almost £1 million in the eight new Wright Renown-bodied B10BLEs represents the largest ever single investment in Huntingdon's bus service and, together with the drafting in of newer buses to replace Bristol VRs, which were eliminated within a few days of the launch of Huntingdon & District, significantly reduced the average age of the fleet at Stukeley Road.

Blazefield in Huntingdon. carrying a livery very similar to that of Yorkshire Coastliner, Huntingdon & District 120 (R120 HNK), a new Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLE, heads into Huntingdon from Cambridge.
JOHN ROBINSON

BUSES, BAIRNS, BUGGIES AND BOOTS THE CHEMIST

Increase your loadings? That's kid's stuff, according to DOUGLAS HARRISON

I am a parent. Of two young women, aged 17 and 20, and my wild son Euan, now 7. I am also fairly able and healthy, despite my advancing years. Able and healthy enough that, when my son was still young enough to be buggy-bound, I was able to take him into town, and elsewhere, by bus and coach.

The coach wasn't such a problem. You unloaded at one bus station, and disembarked at another. The timetable at the bus station was usually such that you had time to fold the buggy, stow luggage, get up the high-floor steps, buy a ticket, and settle yourself and child down the journey. But bus services in town were another matter.

I have vivid memories, when he was about two, of standing in Hope Street, Glasgow, in driving sleet with Euan in his buggy, and piles of Christmas shopping slung on its handles. When the AN68 on the 61 service hove into view through the sleet, I had to:

- get him out of his buggy;
- hold onto him to restrain him from running down the street (which he had done, on several occasions);
- detach the Christmas shopping and fold the buggy single-handed;
- find the right change;
- try to not lose my place in the queue (insofar as Glaswegians recognise the concept of queuing);
- and eventually get me, Euan, buggy and shopping on to the platform;
- pay the driver whilst still controlling all my accoutrements;
- get shopping and folded buggy into an already overflowing luggage pen over the nearside front wheel;
- and find a seat!

Getting off was easier, but only marginally. And if the bus was a high-floor Leopard, the problems were even greater, with not one but several steps to negotiate to board.

Unfortunately for me, low-floors weren't around when Euan was wee. But when, over two years ago, I was asked by Strathclyde Buses to go to Tynemouth for a Tyne & Wear PTE seminar on the results of a lowfloor service which had been monitored by the TRL, I jumped at the chance.

The service, Coastline's 325/6 North Shields/Whitley Bay Circular, had previously been operated by conventional double-deckers. By the time of the seminar, it had been operated for a year by low-floor Wright Pathfinders on Dennis Lance, with good bus-stop infrastructure provided by the Council and the PTE. After a year, there was a 5% increase in revenue, with the new passengers including 500 parents with buggies per week, all, by definition, full fare passengers.

And over the time since then, operators all over the country have discovered that marketing lowfloor services increases revenue by creating new custom. This has mainly been parents who had been reluctant to go through the stressful experiences I have recorded above, of using conventional vehicles, with shopping and a small child in a buggy. And as more low-floors have been ordered, the unit costs have fallen, and the premium prices have reduced to the point where the Alexander PS on a high-floor chassis is now out of production.

But can the low-floor market be grown even more? I believe it can. Here is a thought for market researchers for the industry. What do parents with buggy-borne small children buy, which nobody else buys? Answer: kids' clothes, nappies, and for the very wee ones, baby food. Where do parents buy these items? Supermarkets, Mothercare, and big chemists like Boots. So how do you maximise the impact of your new low-floor service, and grow the maximum number of new passengers? Do a deal with the supermarkets, specialist kids' stores, and chemists served by the route, so that your promotional material is distributed at the checkout with all the nappies, kids, clothes and baby food sold on the route.

Result: you maximise the number of new passengers on your new super-route. And if you are providing a quality service, there is a good chance that these new bus passengers will use other services too, once they realise your buses are passenger-friendly, and you care about their needs as passengers:

And if you aren't sure how to do this in-house, my wee consultancy business will do it for you!

THE FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON on an unusual Volkswagen

The Volkswagen LT series with coach-built bodywork was never common in Britain although the Leeds builder Optare produced quite a healthy total in both bus and coach form. However theirs were by no means the only ones, as Dixon-Lomas of Bredbury near Stockport bodied two LT50s as early as 1985 under the Made to Measure Mini Coaches banner.

One of the pair was a 19-seater coach (C353 BRJ) which spent several years with Axe Valley Mini Travel of Southleigh, Devon. The other, a slightly longer 23-seater registered C25 BNC, was at the time of photographing owned by Elliott's of Ash on the Surrey/Hampshire border. Apart from length they also differed with regard to windscreen size, the Axe Valley VW having a full height screen in complete contrast to the inadequate-looking Transporter version fitted to its bigger brother.

Made to Measure was just one of a host of small bodybuilders engaged in the conversion of vans into minibuses, their first examples appearing around 1982. Some four or five years later the firm became a limited company continuing the business of van conversions, including many Mercedes, until eventual closure around 1993.

The LT50 was a visitor to Epsom Downs on Derby Day 1995 and found discreetly hidden amongst the foliage on the nearby golf course — probably to avoid frightening the horses.

C25 BNC, one of two Dixon Lomas-bodied Volkswagen LT50s, seen when 10 years old in 1995.

ON THE MAP

BARRY S DOE AFIMA, MCIT

This month I deal with operators first. No pun in 'first' but of interest is a new map from **First York** (tel: 01904 435637)! Leaflets unfortunately usually come with no check-list or map, rendering them of little use, but First York has a separate map and index which shows what can be done effectively and cheaply.

Produced in-house, the map is two-colour showing black routes with red numbers for its system, with routes going into a City Centre box. The reverse shows the box blown up with all streets named, reversed out if bus routes, and with numbers alongside. Unlike some of the professional cartographers' jobs I have recently reviewed, the boxes on each side match and it is easy to trace each route in full! An index is added and the bus stops in the centre used by each are listed.

The map states it only covers daytime Mondays to Saturday and for peaks, evenings and Sundays one should refer to leaflets. As evenings and Sundays are usually run by other operators that is inevitable — the area clearly cries out for an authority map showing everything. What First York has done is most commendable.

Wilts & Dorset has issued its system map without change in style (tel: 01202 673555). From Pindar it includes the whole network, including Damory, and its blow-ups of Poole & Bournemouth and Salisbury centres are superb. This merely complements the maps that are included in its excellent timetable book for Dorset & West Hampshire, which are in-house and include large-scale blow-ups of Bournemouth town centre and Interchange, Lymington and even Southampton city centre, despite that being out of the area.

Turning to counties, **Cheshire** has issued its timetable books for the summer (less those for Halton and Warrington which are now unitary authorities) and each has maps as usual, but most unusual is that one of the books, that for Northwich and Winsford, has a separate system map in addition to those in the book itself (tel: 01244 602666). From FWT the map is multi-colour, but is successful because the number of colours together is kept to a minimum. This is not because there are few routes, but because the coloured routes represent corridors rather than individual services.

Indeed, roughly 30 services are shown on one side with only seven strong colours, and even in the centre there are rarely more than three parallel as a result. In addition, where some services terminate on the map leaving others on the same corridor to continue off the edge, the latter group retain the colour but become dashed. The key to groups is combined with a small frequency chart and each side is therefore self-contained. Railways are added, as are rivers, but the background has no relief. The only serious error is the omission of a scale, but I find this a refreshing experiment that has potential and avoids the usual cop-out in the town centre so common with multi-coloured publications. Whether colour-blind users will find it useful remains to be seen, but I find it one of the best multi-colour maps I have seen.

Re-issued with no change in style is the system map from **Leicestershire** (tel: 0116 251 1411) which includes Leicester City Council. One of the few public transport maps produced by Map Creation it remains clear and with excellent blow-ups of many towns, but it retains its awful frequency-chart with totally-undefined codes like 'irregular'.

It is a pity Leicestershire did not look at its neighbour **Warwickshire** which has just improved its system map by the addition of a frequency-chart (tel: 01926 414140). From FWT the main side has changed little and is a little bland as it lacks all background relief. Indeed, by using a white background for Warwickshire yet dark green for its seven neighbours, the latter look better than the county itself! Incidentally a surprising error is showing 'Hereford & Worcester' on a map produced two months after it became Worcestershire.

Red routes are used, except for 'irregular' services which are blue — and 'irregular' is defined as less than daily. Railways are added. There are no town plans, Warwickshire telling me these will appear in their timetable books.

West Sussex has re-issued its system map without change in layout (tel: 0345 959099). From Pindar, it also suffers from the same rather bland white background, but is nevertheless a good map.

Finally, a first issue, from **Worcestershire** (tel: 0345 125436). From FWT this again has white background, coloured for neighbouring counties, but seems much better as the scale is smaller and more detail is shown. Less-then-daily routes are grey, less-then-two-hourly green and others red. Long-distance paths, railways and much tourist detail is added. The frequency-chart has a column showing in which of the four comprehensive books each service appears. Coach and train summaries are added, as are TICs, an index and operators' addresses. Hereford & Worcester always did things well. It is clear the new counties created from it will carry on the good work.

THEN & NOW

Then & Now visits Aylesbury, county town of Buckinghamshire. The period picture, an AEC publicity shot, was almost certainly posed for the photographer's benefit, although the AEC Q does appear to be traversing Kingsbury Square quite convincingly. Try parking a vehicle in the middle of the road here today!

This picture, has been published before. It first appeared in Modern Transport, dated 16 November 1935, featuring again in Buses February 1988 p53, so we set out to attempt to recreate the scene.

Kingsbury Square now has a large triangular island, The bus stop visible in the modern picture is a reminder of the days in the interim, when the Square served as the town's bus station.

Arriva the Shires is now the main operator in the town, having swallowed up the majority of the independents, including owner of the Q, Keith Coaches, which bought Red Rover in 1955. The two operations were merged in 1975, before selling out to what was then Luton & District in 1987. The Keith Coaches name was dropped in 1985.

Today, we see Arriva the Shires' Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D, 2116 (N186 EMJ)

LONDON

LT's NEW CHIEF

The appointment of Denis Tunnicliffe as chief executive of LT should be welcomed, since he was previously managing director of the Underground, and therefore knows a bit about transport. That's so much better than appointing some businessman who has run a company selling ice creams or widgets or something.

Actually, Denis Tunnicliffe could be described as a transport man through and through, since he spent 21 years with British Airways and then two with International Leisure Group as the chief executive of its aviation division, which included Air Europe. He is, or was, a qualified pilot too

But it is the official description of his tasks for the future that caught my eye. One of them says that LT has '96 weeks to alter the way in which public transport in provided in London . . . This is a rare opportunity to get things absolutely right for London, our staff and our customers.'

The talk of 96 weeks came as some surprise, and no doubt refers to the time that political columnists have told us will elapse before a new mayor of London is in place and we have a Transport for London Authority, or some such. Such a body could well bring about big changes within the LT we know at present.

I only hope that the best part of two years will be spent by the Government and its advisers in listening to what is wrong with the present set-up, and how things can be improved. And top of their agenda should be a proper system of consultation for route changes, and elimination of the present nonsense where new route tenders are awarded first, and then the hasty, and un-listening consultation follows. They might also think about eliminating nonsenses such as cutting off a couple of Barnet to Potters Bar services (see below), and then running the same buses empty past the same bus stops. If they then think of deeper changes, they might well wonder whether the present system could be changed to encourage operators to be innovative. Tendering doesn't do that.

TRAMLINK TRAUMAS

One section of LT must be secretly delighted that Croydon Tramlink is its baby rather than anyone else's. That must be saving it an awful lot of letter-writing and complaining, because the Tramlink works are causing a fair degree of chaos to traffic and bus services at times. Yes, I know its all in a good cause, and I know that they took the Sheffield lesson to heart: Sheffield had some road closures and diversions that lasted for months and months and drove away trade as well as traffic from some localities.

Tramlink's worst chaos seems to come when something changes. I happened to be in Croydon when the road serving the bus station became one-way. There were plenty of experts and observers (some wearing reflective LT jackets) on hand to observe this particular change, but that did not prevent the bus services subsequently descending into chaos. Waiting 45 minutes for a bus when you have three routes to choose from and a theoretical combined ten-minute frequency isn't very clever.

However, you will be pleased to hear that Tramlink will be incredibly environmentally friendly, something those involved keep telling us. I thought modern buses were environmentally friendly too . . .

CROSS-BOUNDARY, CROSS PASSENGERS

When the old London Passenger Transport Board was formed efforts were made to avoid cutting cross-town services on some of the boundaries of the LPTB area. These efforts were not entirely successful, and there were subsequent nonsenses, such as Aldershot & District's route 1, which logically should have run Camberley-Egham-Staines, but which terminated at Egham, a place which was not, and is not, a prime traffic focal point.

Formation of LPTB was really an early example of nationalisation, with the benefits and disadvantages that that brought about. It would be nice to think that some of the transport (not political) lessons from that had been learnt, but it appears not. People living just outside LT's area and served by cross-boundary routes seem to be getting a pretty raw deal.

That is not only my view, or the unfortunate passengers' view. It is also that of the London Regional Passengers Committee, which complains that LT is ignoring its views. There doesn't seem to be much point in having an organisation like the LRPC to which aggrieved passengers are encouraged to complain, if it is totally toothless.

The problems have arisen in the Barnet and Potters Bar area, where route 234 ran between Barnet and Potters Bar on what were really garage journeys made to change drivers. When the route was re-tendered, LT was not prepared to subsidise a service beyond the London boundary.

Now the problem has arisen again with route 326 (Potters Bar-Barnet-Finchley-Hendon-Brent Cross), which LT proposes to cut back to start in Barnet: there is also an intermediate change of route. The existing route between Potters Bar and Barnet goes a different way from the old 84, but again LT is declining to subsidise it in future. The LRPC says the matter rests on two factors: does the route pay for itself and if not (as is often the case) how much subsidy is needed from the LT 'pot' and what subsidies are the counties themselves able to put into the routes.

But I think there is another point worth making, and that is the extraordinary lack of common-sense displayed in the case of the 84 and 326. For buses on both routes have to go to and from Potters Bar as that is where they are garaged and where the drivers come from. But buses on 84s now and possibly 326s soon just operate 'not in service.' For what the difference in cost must be that is plain daft, isn't it?

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

There has been quite an increase in the number of press releases about bus services issued by LT in recent months. And a new departure seems to be the issuing of warnings (justified no doubt) about impending disruption caused by road works. A couple of examples are on the refurbishment of Kingston Bridge, which began in mid-May, and roadworks in Slade Hill, Enfield, from mid-April.

Even more interesting is a press release announcing that Nostalgiabus route 306 (Kingston-Epsom) will be withdrawn by the operator after 24 July, because of the losses incurred in this commercially-operated route. That release is strange, in that I do not recall LT ever announcing the start of the 306, probably because it was commercially operated. I am sorry to see the route go, because it provided additional facilities on roads where the service provided by London & Country had gone from five buses an hour down to two. Also, when I and others sampled the 306 the conductors on it were all that conductors should be — kind and helpful to old ladies and mothers with small children — and pleasant to the staff and relations of *Buses* too! But alas the service was not well publicised. With anything new, publicity is all-important, and it also takes a long time for your average resident to grasp that there is a new service.

CENTRAL LONDON CHANGES

Travel London, the new National Express Group subsidiary, is here at last, having taken over routes 211 (Waterloo-Victoria-Chelsea-Hammersmith) on 27 June and C1 (Victoria-Earl's Court-Kensington) on 13 June. Both had previously been operated by London General, but C1 was given up earlier than planned because of staff shortages, and had been operated on a temporary basis by Stagecoach Selkent and Metrobus.

Both routes are being worked from a depot at the Stewarts Lane base of National Express rail operator Gatwick Express, and there is a further Gatwick connection in that the legal operator is shown as Speedlink Airport Services, now doubt to save Travel West Midlands the bother of obtaining a new licence in the South-East Traffic Area. At the moment white-liveried Volvo B6LEs with Wright bodies are being used on C1 until the 10 Optare Solos are ready: they will be painted red, of course. Two-door short-wheelbase Optare Excels with a total capacity of 52 (half of them standing) are being used on the 211: they are red with white and blue flashes. The man running the Travel London operation is no stranger to the capital: he is Norman Kemp, one time managing director of London Northern.

Together the two routes need some 70 staff, around half of whom are new to the industry. It will be interesting to see how successful this recruitment is, and whether medium-term staff retention is better. Another unusual feature of the two services is that they are gross tenders and not the now-normal net ones, and they run for seven years instead of the usual five. Perhaps this was the price LT had to pay to attract a new major operator into London. But then C1 has never been at the top of anyone's list as a service on which to take a commercial risk, even if 211 has more potential.

Left:
Speedlink legal lettering on a Travel London Excel.
PHILIP LAMB

Below
Travel London is a new operator for London, an offshoot of Travel West Midlands. So far it is running new 9.6m dual-door Optare Excels on the C1 (Victoria-Kensington High Street).
PHILIP LAMB

IN BRIEF

First CentreWest has begun a new service connecting with each Heathrow Express train arrival at Paddington and serving major West End hotels. It runs under the Hotel Express name and uses four dual-door 9.2m long Dennis Darts in a metallic blue livery. Similar new Darts, but in red and without extra luggage accommodation, have been delivered to replace single-door Darts on route 31 (Camden Town-Kensington-Chelsea).

Ten double-deckers on five different central London routes are carrying full depth posters at the rear aimed at motorists who block bus lanes. In the windows of the buses are pictures of a selection of bored, cross or disapproving passengers, with a message between decks reading '3.5 million passengers would like you to keep out of the bus lane.' The poster campaign will run until the end of the Summer.

Fixed stops have been introduced on most of route U1 (Ruislip-Uxbridge-West Drayton-Stockley estate), parts of U3 (Uxbridge-West Drayton-Heathrow) and part of K2 (Hook-Chessington-Kingston).

The 31 (Camden Town-Chelsea) at last has its dual-door low-floor Dennis Darts, run by First CentreWest. They have Marshall bodywork, as shown by DM222 (R322 TLM).
PHILIP LAMB

NORTH-WEST CHANGES

There were a number of changes to routes in north-west London from 27 June. Operation of route 260 (Shepherd's Bush-North Finchley) has passed from Armchair to Metroline, which will introduce new double-deckers next year: Metrobuses will be standard fare until then.

Further west, Armchair took over route 237 (Shepherd's Bush-Hounslow Heath) using double-deckers moved over from the 260.

Another change follows the introduction of new low-floor single-deckers on the 302 (now Mill Hill-Kensal Rise), still operated by Metroline, but no longer with Metrobuses. Schooldays-only journeys are being introduced, worked by 'red double-deckers' — LT's phrase, not mine. This is the first of three LT contracts won by Goldblade, trading as London Traveller, though the operator has been seen in the London area in recent times on rail-replacement work. The second service won by London Traveller is school bus 643 (Brent Cross-Hendon-East Finchley), also with double-deckers, and these replace schoolday buses on 143 previously worked by Metroline. Metroline is now — or soon will be — using larger low-floor single-deckers on 143 (Archway-Brent-Highgate-Hendon). In plain bus language, routes 143 and 302 are both receiving Plaxton-bodied two-door Dennis Darts, of more than usual interest in being to the new Pointer 2 design.

More changes in the offing for West London involve routes 92 (St Raphael's North-Neasden-Wembley-Ealing) and 297 (Ealing-Wembley-Neasden). Both are at present worked by what used to be CentreWest, but is now described by LT as First Challenger. From the end of this year First Challenger would still run the 92, but with new low-floor single-deckers (instead of the ordinary Darts now used) while 297 would be operated by Metroline, also with new low-floor single-deckers.

MILLAR'S Tales

ALAN MILLAR'S MONTHLY COLUMN OF MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

TOPS HER WHAT?

Humblest apologies to Clive D'Eath and those others of you who have been waiting since September 1997's issue to find out what the 'Tops Her' sign on a PMT park-&-ride bus shelter in Hanley was all about. As he and others have suggested, it's almost certainly meant to show 'Stops Here'. Alternative suggestions are still welcome.

Whatever happened to...? ...all those gas buses

The short answer is, not a lot since this time last year. Then, we reported the launch of Northampton's CNG-fuelled Volvo B10Ls and the unveiling of the first LPG-fuelled DAF Bus SB220 for the UK market.

Since then, more DAF demonstrators have appeared, PMT has one in its Crosville park-&-ride fleet in Chester, Travel West Midlands has begun trials of its CNG-fuelled B10Ls in Walsall and the various experiments with CNG-fuelled Dennis Darts and Optare MetroRiders have continued in such sensitive spots as Southampton, Bristol, Cambridge and Newbury. Oh, and Guide Friday and a few other operators of aged open-top tour buses have tried to calm things down with hostile neighbours by using LPG or other cleaner fuels.

There's a fair chance of more gas buses coming, especially if the imminent White Paper on transport urges car-free city centres and cleaner buses.

But the diesel bus is putting up a convincing fight. Indeed, the chaps at The Oxford Bus Company are convinced that they can achieve much that's mooted by the gas promoters by fitting their latest buses with exhaust traps and burning city diesel. And they don't need all the unfamiliar palaver associated with gas tanks and segregated parking and refuelling areas.

WE NEED MORE THAN JUST BUS LANES

As a columnist of this magazine, you would hardly expect me to agree with much that Jeremy Clarkson says or writes about cars and car drivers. Even less about his view that bus lanes are a shocking waste of road space, used only for half-empty buses populated with little old ladies returning from town with one tin of cat food.

But I've come to realise that there is an image problem with bus lanes. After over 5,000 miles of driving the length and breadth of Britain in May and June — Aberdeen to Plymouth and Cumbria to Suffolk by car and hire van — I've found myself alongside a goodly number of these products of quality partnerships.

As I've dutifully driven out of buses' way — and so have all but an exceptional handful of scary maniacs (like one particular clot in Cambridge who was swerving in and out by a series of illegal manoeuvres at well over the speed limit) — I've kept being haunted by what the bus's promoters were saying a few years back when they began campaigning for a better deal for our favourite form of public transport. They said motorists could soon be persuaded to switch to smart, modern buses as they sat in queues of immobile cars and watched buses glide past, triggering traffic lights and swooshing into town. Motorists might, and I truly want them to, but my experience in Norwich, for instance (where I also used a very punctual, clean, friendly service of First Eastern Counties' Dennis Darts), was to be sat in the queues of cars while the bus lanes remained empty. No gliding or swooshing buses. Just unused road space. Not much incentive to try public transport.

And in a similar vein, what level of co-ordinated planning persuades some division or agent of London Transport to maintain its bus stops and shelters on Finchley Road — and park its vans in the bus lane — on a wet weekday morning when multitudes are heading for a test match at Lords, forcing buses to edge in and out of the rest of the snail's pace traffic? Haven't these people heard of overnight maintenance or, at very least, that they ought to deposit their vans somewhere less likely to obstruct the capital's buses?

KÖHLS TO CARDIFF AND BRUM

A certain former prime minister of recent memory (female, to help you narrow down the options) famously refused to go anywhere by train. Aside from election campaigning, there's not been much evidence of her successors making any more use of public transport or any less use of their ministerial Jaguars or other cars built for something more exclusive than the mass market.

On the other hand, had you attended the European summit in Cardiff in June or the G8 summit in Birmingham in May, you could well have seen a familiar, not-to-say familiarly large figure stepping off a Caetano Algarve midicoach operated by Grosvenor Executive Coach Hire of Solihull.

This unlikely 22-seat conveyance, *The Times* tells me, was booked by Germany's Chancellor Helmut Köhl for all his British transport needs after he discovered that the German embassy's largest Mercedes was just too cramped and uncomfortable for a national leader with the physique of one pledged to support a national diet of beer and sausages.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER?

A tiny piece of added detail Sandy MacDonald wisely omitted from his Scottish Column last month is that the biggest of the Glasgow city routes passing from First Glasgow to Arriva travels close to the Millar abode.

The change will almost certainly lead to a less varied procession of buses than First Glasgow's regular assortment of such wonders as Caetano Stagecoach B10Ms, East Lancs Darts and various oddball Leyland Olympians. But as an occasional user of service 96/97 I'm more pleased that it's being taken over by an operator that gives change.

For, as I've opined before in this column, one of the less inviting features of the city's main bus network is the combination of 'no change' fares collection and an apparent absence of any readily available source of information of how much any journey is likely to cost. You can find yourself, as Mrs M and I did a few Sundays ago when using said route, raiding all known sources of family coinage to scrape together what you think might be the total of two adult fares.

When the bus arrives, you project your voice through an anti-attack screen to ask the driver, as we did, for two singles to Anniesland and wait while he consults a fares table of similar girth to a monopoly board with type the size of the bottom line you can never read in an optician's eye test. You sigh with relief that you have located enough change to pay the required £2.20, even if you now shove more 5p and 2p pieces in his coin hopper than any reasonable driver can be expected to count.

How much easier it would be for everyone if that information was available in advance. Over to you, Arriva.

BEWARE OF FAST REVERSING ROUTEMASTERS . . .

Richard Walter couldn't quite believe his eyes when he spied a row of these red Routemaster fronts, all on the backs of Volvos, lined up at First SMT's garage in Musselburgh. I did a similar double-take when I saw one (I don't know if it's unique or one of several) on the back of a lowheight First Glasgow Olympian, (*pictured below*) for the shades of red aren't a million miles adrift of each other and the effect is even more dramatic when you appear to be watching a Routemaster accelerating backwards into the horizon.

It's all courtesy of a bus backs advertising campaign for Smirnoff vodka which looks even more convincing as the real rear registration plate appears in the proper space below the RM grille.

There's a fair chance that, somewhere, one of these contraptions may even have been stuck on the back of a bus that now carries a former Routemaster registration. Certainly, Richard Walter thinks so, but he's rightly more worried about the effect this ad is going to have on drivers who find themselves face-to-face with a bus that appears to be going in the wrong direction. I await your first reports of accidents involving these oddities.

. . . AND OTHERS GUARDED BY HUNGARIAN WAITERS

There are other hazards awaiting the intrepid Routemaster watcher, as Michael Dryhurst found on a mission for all readers of Millar's Tales.

Moved by my reports of the McDonalds Leyland PD3A in Belgium, he's doing his bit to track down other red double-deckers ekeing out their retirement in the shadow of the golden arches. He reminds me that Routemaster RM1924 sat outside a branch in Mississauga, Ontario from 1987 to 1996, but his latest discovery was what purports to be RM2033 in the Budapest suburb of Bekasmegyer

Whether this was one of the by-products that country ever imagined would flow from the collapse of the Iron Curtain is anyone's guess, but there it was in splendid isolation at the end of an HÉV train journey from Ratthyany Ter station.

I share this locational information as Michael suspects one of you might feel bold enough to complete some unfinished business. He wasn't prepared to take the fleetnumber on the cab wall at face value and lifted the bonnet to look for the ID plate and see if this truly was the bus that once was ALM 33B. Only, a scurrying sound rapidly issued forth from what McDonalds rather grandly likes to refer to as the 'restaurant', and that scurrying was accompanied by a certain tone of Magyar invective from the waiter/server which sounded to Michael's ears a lot more like an equivalent of 'Git yer beggaring 'ands orf me baby's bonnet' than 'Just wait while I look up my London Transport stockbook'.

'Although I'm now over 60, I've maintained rigidly a life-long strand of cowardice and once again did as I was bid,' Michael tells me, happy to assume it probably is RM2033 and that he hasn't been blacklisted internationally by the world's most famous burger chain. Then again, as the editor of *Buses* enjoyed a splendid ride from Sunbury Cross to Crowthorne (for Classic Automotion) on London United's AEC-engined, though otherwise refurbished, RM2033 the other week, and noticed it in service in London the following day, it probably isn't.

Will the real RM2033 stand up? This Routemaster outside McDonalds in Budapest claims to be RM2033, though RM2033 also returned to service from LT reserve, with London United, last year and ran one of the services to Automotion on 21 June this year. MICHAEL DRYHURST/STEPHEN MORRIS

SIGN LANGUAGE ALL OF ITS OWN

There will be more wrong-way-round buses and absurdly tall and short bus stops in the coming months, but meanwhile how about a couple of examples of the pointless and incomprehensible?

I'm grateful to Stewart Brown for the two examples shown here. The invisible information point is in Shrewsbury bus station where Stewart tells me, in the interests of fairness, that there were some timetable cases just out of camera shot. But he found that they contain details of services run by King Offa Travel which may not date back to the Mercian ruler, but gave up running buses more than two years ago.

The concept of open and closed bus stops — in this case in an open-to-the-elements bus shelter in Falkirk — eludes Stewart every bit as much as me. Keep your eyes open and cameras clicking to find more examples of such absurdities.

20 YEARS AGO

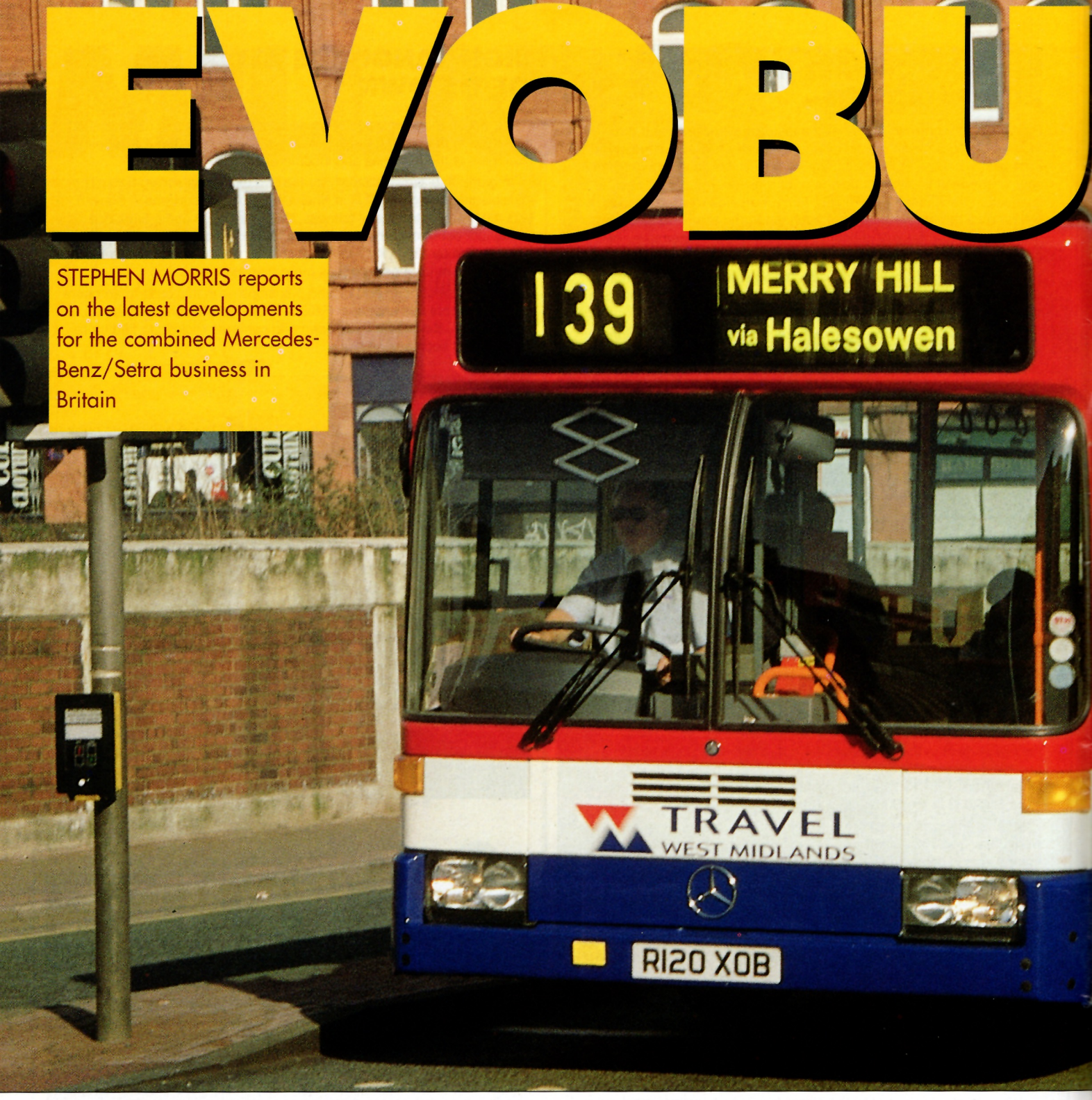
There's a neat symmetry in this month's news that Volvo is following its closure of Leyland's bus plants by axing the Steyr and Drogmöller operations in Austria and Germany and running down production at Irvine. For our July 1978 issue carried a three-page report on the opening of the company's purpose-designed bus plant at Borås in Sweden — a factory then designed to build 3,600 assembled bus chassis and a further 2,000 knocked-down kits.

Borås (pronounced 'Bo Ross') had been planned since 1974 and had begun limited production in October 1977. The plant is in an area where the traditional textile industry had gone into decline and much was made in 1978 of its modern layout and, equally crucially, its rejection of the tedium of production lines in favour of teams of workers assembling chassis.

The new plant was a significant step in Volvo's decision, taken only 10 years earlier, not to pull out of bus and coach manufacturing. Our report reminded the world that Volvo's bus production had slumped from 1,500 a year in 1961 to 870 in 1968; it had separated truck and bus production and by 1973 was up to 1,500 a year again and snapping at the heels of the leaders in the UK market with its B58 coach. By 1977, sales were up to 2,920 even though, we reported: 'In Great Britain and Portugal, sales dropped somewhat after the significant deliveries made during the two previous years.'

EVOBU

STEPHEN MORRIS reports on the latest developments for the combined Mercedes-Benz/Setra business in Britain



It's almost embarrassing to look through back issues of *Buses* and see the number of times we have predicted that Mercedes' latest initiative would be the one which would see it finally established as a supplier of full-sized buses and coaches in Britain. Over the last 10 years or so we've seen the O.303 coach introduced in a new version with Plaxton bodywork, we've seen the O.405 bus underframe introduced in connection with Alexander, which fell spectacularly at the first fence, the low-cost OH1416 tackling the other end of the market in conjunction with Wrights as a cheap, lightweight full-size bus which never caught on.

The O.405 underframe offered in conjunction with Optare has been very much more successful, but still gives little impression in Britain that worldwide Mercedes-Benz sells more than three times as many heavy buses as Volvo. The recent upturn in the British market means it is now the second largest in Europe, after Germany, yet in 1997 Mercedes-Benz had less than 1% of it, while Setra had a little more, giving the two a combined British market share of 2%. Europe-wide, Mercedes-Benz has 16% of the market and Setra a surprisingly large 10%. This year UK figures will look stronger, thanks to the big order from Travel West Midlands, which now calls for 113 low-floor O.405Ns, including the 11 artics recently announced, and including the 35 or so already in service at the time of writing.

So does Mercedes-Benz *really* mean business this time? We should really refer to EvoBus, because that is the name of the combined Setra and Mercedes business, and work has already begun on a £4 million UK headquarters on a 4.11acre site near Coventry. That indicates a seriousness of intent.

What is EvoBus?

EvoBus was established in 1995, when Daimler-Benz took over the Setra coach and bus business from Kässbohrer. This is part of the ongoing globalisation of the whole automotive business, and subsequently we have also seen the pooling of Iveco's and Renault's bus and coach interests. More mergers in the bus and coach manufacturing cannot be ruled out, and while it would be fun to speculate, we'd better not!

The merger has made Daimler-Benz's combined bus businesses massive; it delivered 26,000 buses over eight tonnes in 1997, representing 12% of the world market for buses. EvoBus is based in Western Europe, and in 1997 took 27% of the European market, with 7,910 heavy buses and coaches, an increase of 8% over 1996. Of these Mercedes contributed 5,610, of which 4,470 were complete buses,

S In Britain

Travel West Midlands is taking delivery of 113 Mercedes-Benz O.405N low-floor buses, 11 of which will be artics. Some are now in service.
ADRIAN PEARSON

Inset:
The S 250 is the only Setra model currently offered in Britain, though the new S 300 will be introduced soon. This S 250 of Clarkes of London was at the Brighton Coach Rally this year; latterly Clarkes had standardised on Volvo/Jonckheeres.
STEPHEN MORRIS

1,130 chassis and 10 'others' (presumably shells delivered to UVG for finishing for Travel West Midlands) and Setra built 2,300, all complete vehicles. Looking from a British perspective, it is easy to underestimate the strength of Setra in the European context. These impressive sales figures gave the group a turnover of 3.8 billion DM, or about £1.3 billion.

EvoBus is keeping the Mercedes and Setra brands quite separate, and although it uses Setra's traditional 'K' symbol, the Kässbohrer name is not used in Europe. Kässbohrer built other products, such as semi-trailers, and these parts of the business were sold to other buyers, so for Daimler-Benz (the holding company for Mercedes-Benz and EvoBus) to use the Kässbohrer name could have been confusing.

EvoBus has 12 subsidiary companies to sell and look after its vehicles in various European territories, one of which is EvoBus UK. It has also opened 27 'Centres of Competence', dedicated specialist service centres, which are specially qualified in both brands and are backed up by more than 1,000 Mercedes-Benz and Setra dealers Europewide, which are able to look after day-to-day requirements.

Setra

Kässbohrer has always traded as Setra in buses and coaches (whilst known only for very upmarket coaches in Britain, Setra buses are available on the Continent). The name indicates the company's commitment to integral vehicles, as it is short for *selbst tragend*, or 'self-supporting'.

Setras first came into Britain in any quantity in 1981, following coach deregulation when operators were looking to opulent solutions to finding their feet in a newly competitive market, where Bedfords and Leyland Leopards no longer conjured up the right image to win passengers. The company quickly established an enviable reputation for quality; its products were considered quite simply the best you could buy in Britain. Not everybody could afford the best, of course, and it has remained a niche supplier, but a steady one. Last year it sold a respectable 41; its niche maybe is small but it's solid and dependable, evidenced by the fact the Setra is still here 17 years on, while countless other 'niche manufacturers' in the coach business have come and gone in the same timespan.

Established in Bordon, Hampshire, in September 1981, Kässbohrer UK moved to Lincoln towards the end of 1988, and became EvoBus UK in 1995. Over the years it has sold a number of different Setra models, built in the company's main factory at Ulm, in Germany, but

also importing the Tornado range from Samano in Spain and the lower-cost Rational, built in Ligny-en-Barrois in France. These days Ligny concentrates on Setra's bus range, and the Rational was essentially a dual-purpose shell, though sold as a coach in Britain.

The main Setra range in Europe now is the S 300, a stylish coach which comes in a variety of forms, including three-axle single and double-deckers, some built to 13.5m length. There is also a 'Kombibusse' range within the S 300 series, which equates to our dual-purpose specification. For European operators requiring a lower-cost coach the S 250 is still built at the Ulm plant. This is generally available in a limited range of more basic specifications. However Setra also builds the S 250 as a rather more high-specification vehicle specifically for the British market with a choice of Mercedes and MAN engines and a much enhanced range of interior trims. Though generally aimed at the top end of the market, it has been specified by Bebbs and Chenery's for National Express work. Currently this is the only model sold in Britain — for a time following its introduction here in 1995 it was sold as the S 250 Special, denoting its special status in the British market, and since then some 150 have been sold here.

The first example of the S300 range, the 12m, two-axle high-floor S 315 GT-HD is soon to be offered alongside the S 250 in Britain and orders have already been taken for it.

As noted Setras are built at Ulm, Ligny and in Samano, Spain; the Spanish plant was sold to Kässbohrer's Chilean importer some years ago, and continued to build Setras under licence. It did not form part of EvoBus at its formation, but was acquired by EvoBus in May this year. Setra also has a joint venture in China, and has 360 units on order there for 1999. Meanwhile, given the lack of presence of Mercedes-Benz in the USA, Setra is still sold there as Kässbohrer Inc.

Top:
Shown at the UITP show at Stuttgart last year was the impressive Mercedes Citaro, which will replace the O.405N. It is due to come to Britain next year.

Above:
Bebb of Llantwit Fardre unusually uses Setra S 250s on National Express work.
PHILIP WALLIS

Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz of course has a very comprehensive range, from minibuses to artics. Like Setra its range includes up-market integral coaches, primarily the O.404, although this is also available as a separate underframe for local bodybuilding, and there are also dual-purpose Intercity buses. The other significant vehicle is the O.405 citybus, now primarily the O.405N low-floor version, but in addition to complete vehicles it is also available as a separate underframe, in low-floor or conventional entrance version. Also now available is the very impressive, high-tech Citaro low-floor citybus, described in more detail in *Buses* September 1997.

Mercedes' main bus factory is at Mannheim, but it also has a plant near Istanbul in Turkey.

In Britain of course it is best-known for minibuses, nowadays with the Vario in the 27-33-seat sector, though as noted above the O.405 is gradually building up its presence here, while the O.404 coach is also just beginning to appear.

Although Mercedes-Benz has a sizeable segment of the European market, much of the contribution to its massive volume worldwide comes from outside Europe, which is not embraced by EvoBus. Latin America is its biggest market, where it supplies a whole range of locally-produced bus chassis. It also supplies citybus chassis in Mexico, but is not active in the USA, other than under the Freightliner name, under which it builds bonneted schoolbus chassis. It also has a joint venture in China, Yaxing-Benz, and is developing in the former Eastern European market, notably Russia, where there is a great need to re-equip. Age of buses is not the only problem in Russia; under the Communist range component manufacture was spread out across the USSR, such that spare parts for different aspects of the vehicles are now made in totally separate states and large numbers of buses are off the road awaiting parts.

EvoBus in Britain

The establishment of the new Coventry headquarters of EvoBus UK is going to be a significant step forward for the company. So far EvoBus UK in Lincoln has been purely a Setra dealer — it was simply Kässbohrer UK renamed — but the new EvoBus UK in Coventry, with Hans Smits as managing director, takes responsibility not solely for Setra but also the Mercedes-Benz bus and coach functions currently carried out from MB's headquarters in Milton Keynes. The purpose-built building is due to open on 24 September.

The two sales teams remain in place, and will continue to work independently; Jim Shuttleworth, who has been involved in Setra in Britain right from the very start, is general manager Setra sales & marketing, while Mercedes' UK sales manager, Ian Soden, holds a parallel post for Mercedes-Benz. Completing the management team are Mike Hylton, general manager for after sales services, and Bernd Herchen, general manager for finance and administration. There are to be 40 employees at Coventry, and nearly all of Jim Shuttleworth's team at Lincoln is moving across.

The new building incorporates workshops which will qualify the Coventry headquarters as one of the 27 Centres of Competence, able to carry out body and other specialist repairs on both Mercedes and Setra vehicles and will undertake MoTs. Responsibility for spare parts for Mercedes buses and coaches over 7.5tonnes will transfer from Milton Keynes to Coventry, where a central parts warehouse will also stock all Setra parts. Coventry will be able to supply parts direct to operators, but all Mercedes-Benz commercial vehicle dealers will also be able to supply parts for both ranges. Six of these will become dedicated EvoBus dealers.

EvoBus UK will deal with all Setra coaches — as mentioned above that currently means the S 250, with the S 315 HD-GT coming soon. On the Mercedes-Benz side the O.404 coach is

offered with a Spanish-built Hispano Carrocera body designed specifically for the British market, marketed as the Vita. The first example of this impressive-looking new coach appeared at the Brighton Coach Rally with Westbus.

EvoBus UK will also sell the O.405N citybus. Originally these were to be finished in Britain by UVG, but when UVG went into receivership this work was transferred to Mercedes' own service centre at Wentworth Park, Barnsley. Normally the O.405 is fully finished at Mannheim, but running shells — complete vehicles, framed, panelled, painted and with all mechanical units in place, are supplied to the Spanish and British markets for local finishing to the specific requirements of the local operators. Work includes fitting the entire interior and side windows. EvoBus will continue this process for any other operators of the O.405N too, though it seems likely that the work will continue at Wentworth Park rather than taking up workshop space at Coventry.

Wolfgang Diez, EvoBus chairman, told us that the O.405N chassis could be made available for local bodybuilding, but that the company sees the integral route being more appropriate, especially for low-floor buses. He sees very little future for non-low-floor buses; in Europe some 80% of the market is for low-floor and he acknowledged that in Britain the percentage is probably greater still. The conventional O.405 is still available with Optare bodywork, though he considered that Optare was probably wise to continue to concentrate on its integral products. With the Solo and low-floor Spectra coming on stream Optare has other priorities than developing a low-floor Prisma at present, and EvoBus does not see other obvious partners for bodying the O.405N. Mr Diez also feels that operators benefit from dealing with a single supplier for the complete vehicle. Nonetheless EvoBus can offer Mercedes-Benz full-size chassis if there is a requirement.

The O.405 range does however have something of a finite life now, and there is the promise of the exciting new Citaro low-floor bus to come; it is due to be introduced to the British market towards the end of next year.

EvoBus UK will also deal direct with fleet sales of all PCV minibuses; these will mainly be on Vario, but can include conversions of the smaller Vito (not to be confused with the Vita!) and Sprinter ranges. However non-fleet sales of smaller vehicles will be handled by existing Mercedes-Benz UK dealers, who will also deal direct with bodybuilders for their own requirements. The definition of what constitutes a 'fleet sale' is slightly loose; naturally big groups buying large quantities of Varios will count as fleet sales, and an owner-driver buying a Sprinter conversion would go to a local Mercedes dealer, though independent operators buying a quantity of Varios could go either way.

Wolfgang Diez acknowledged that Mercedes and Setra were not significant players in the increase in the UK heavy bus market from 2,000 in 1992 to 3,900 last year. 'Our position in the British market is still very small', he said. 'But we want to — and will — change this situation'. The creation of EvoBus UK, he said, was an indication that EvoBus considers 'the UK as a core market for our activities in the future'.

Now that EvoBus has a dedicated headquarters and dealer structure in Britain and, with the O.405N, O.404 Vita and Setra S 250 and S 315 HD-GT, a strong product line, this time it really does look to be poised for take-off . . .

Below:
Setra, known in Britain for its coaches, has a range of buses and dual-purpose vehicles on the Continent, and has 10% of the European bus and coach market. A French-built interurban bus is seen in the German town of Crailsheim.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Inset below:
Wolfgang Diez, chairman of EvoBus.

Inset bottom:
Hans Smits is managing director of EvoBus (UK) Ltd, soon to set up a new headquarters in Coventry.

A SECOND

Walsall, we are told, is 'cool, hip and booming'. STEPHEN MORRIS has been looking at a new public transport contribution to this image

They take the Quality Partnership concept seriously in the West Midlands. The concept is one introduced by the last Government and, like many of its policies, it seems, is being embraced wholeheartedly by the present one. It's highly likely that when the White Paper finally emerges (heaven help any transport operator with such a record for late running!), Quality Partnerships will form one of the centrepieces of its proposals for buses.

Quality Partnerships on the ground have been a mixed bunch, and there seem to have been several examples where investment by bus operators hasn't then been matched in quite the way expected by participating local authorities. But, as we say, in the West Midlands they take them seriously. Quality Partnerships here are so far quite selective, but a formula is being reached incorporating a number of elements. It's a high-profile formula, one whereby few living in the locality can not be aware that something has happened to their local bus route — and for Quality Partnerships to work effectively, that's how it should be. Because they are something of a model for how it should be done, they are being billed as 'Showcase'.

So far there are only three Showcases either up and running or about to happen, but the aim ultimately is to convert every major corridor in the West Midlands conurbation to Showcase standard. That doesn't mean every route in the West Midlands will have such facilities, but it should mean that most households will have access to high-quality, high-profile bus services to take them into their nearest major town.

The first was the much-vaunted Line 33 from Birmingham city centre to Pheasey, on the borders of Walsall, and since its launch in April 1997 has increased traffic by something like 30%, though as David Leeder, Travel West Midlands' managing director concedes, some of that growth is by abstraction from other routes. Not all of it is, though, and there has been a genuine 10% growth there, so much so that evening frequencies have been brought up to the same as those in the daytime, and Sunday frequencies have been enhanced too. Some 10% of that growth has come from car users. Line 33 has picked up awards in the Clear Zone initiative, to reduce pollution and congestion, the Bus Industry Awards and an innovation award from the Midlands Association of the Institute of Civil Engineers. More bus priority measures are currently being added to the corridor.

Breaking new ground

The second Showcase has now been launched, in Walsall, and it differs from the Line 33 in one particular respect — it involves two private-sector bus operators, not just one. Rob Donald, director-general of Centro (West Midlands PTE), said that the involvement of two operators showed that the Showcase initiative did not involve deals behind closed doors with one operator, which is especially important as there are some 50 operators serving the West Midlands. It is very difficult to get people out of cars on to public transport, he said, and Showcase is a good demonstration of bus-based public transport being rather different from the preconception most people had of it.

The public-sector side of the equation comes from Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, which has put in £1.25 million of the total Showcase investment of £2.75 million, and Centro which had spent £500,000 on impressive-looking new Commutaport bus shelters. These are eye-catching and attractive units, finished in blue and yellow.

Walsall's contribution has supplied new bus stops and highways work. Like Line 33 the bus stops use Kassel kerbs, manufactured and supplied by Redland Precast and made under licence from Frölich Bau AG, which originally developed them for the German town after which they are named. These have a smooth upright surface, above which the kerb block curves away from the vehicle, and then a textured top surface, and come in a light cream finish. These enable the driver to see the line of the kerb clearly, and the smooth finish means the sidewall of the tyre can touch the kerb without damage, while the curve away from the edge means there is no danger of catching the platform on the kerb. Thus drivers can pull in precisely, and the kerb (and adjoining pavement) is raised to the height of the platform to allow level boarding for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Altogether 46 bus stops have been improved or replaced in Walsall.

The route is that from Walsall town centre to Bloxwich and the adjoining high-density Mossley estate, once one of Walsall's main trolleybus routes; indeed some of the flags for these high-tech bus stops are still mounted on trolleybus traction standards! Walsall MBC has also contributed 2km of very useful bus lanes into the town centre, linking into an old-established contraflow lane, another relic from the trolleybus era. Buses have also been helped through the Mossley estate, where the council agreed to use bus stop boarders to narrow the road to achieve its planned traffic calming; it had intended to install speed humps, but was dissuaded by the bus operators. Further help will come when selective detection is fitted at traffic lights.

This time the route, launched on 16 June, is branded 'SuperLine'.

SHOWCASE

Two operators

The two bus operators are Travel West Midlands, which has supplied seven new or nearly new Wright-bodied Volvo B10Ls for the service, painted in a similar blue and white livery to that used on Line 33, with suitable local branding for its service 301, while the other operator is Choice Travel, run by former Midland Red North and London Forest manager Tom Young with some investment, like so many other medium-sized independents around the country, from one-time Stevensons managing director Julian Peddle.

Walsall has a surprising amount of competition from sizeable independents; Chase Coaches sometimes seems to dominate the town with its noisy but very well-presented orange Leyland Nationals, Pete's Travel and Green Bus also work in and Choice Travel, which now has a fleet of around 45 buses in a smart green, yellow and white livery competes with Travel West Midlands on the Mossley route, which it runs as route 171.

Choice has a fairly mixed fleet — it too runs some well turned-out Leyland Nationals, as well as having some of the very few Mercedes-Benz OH1416-based Wright UrbanRangers on the road. These, Tom Young tells us, have settled down to be good reliable workhorses which, he feels, would have been a much bigger seller had not the low-floor revolution rendered them obsolete virtually overnight following their launch in 1994. However its contribution to the Quality Partnership comes in the form of four new 11.5m Optare Excels which are dedicated to the 171.

Travel West Midlands meanwhile has put 86 low-floor buses into service in Walsall recently — mostly Volvo B6LEs, though now with some B10Ls for the 301, and another 20 are to come. It carried 23 million passengers in the town in 1997, representing a growth of 3%. Indeed TWM experienced growth of 1.6% across its area last year, its first real increase since the 1950s and against a decline in population of 1% per annum.

Timetables are sort of co-ordinated, though co-ordination between the two operators seems to extend only as far as producing a single leaflet showing the two services, and with journeys interweaving with each other in a slightly haphazard way, though — on paper — avoiding running at exactly the same times. Neither has anything approaching a clockface frequency, but with anything between 12 and 14 buses an hour it's best to think of it as every four to six minutes, with two TWM buses, one Choice, one TWM, one Choice, two TWM etc etc. Services start at 05.05 from Mossley, though what happens to the first few buses when they get to Walsall is anyone's guess, as nothing comes back again until 06.20; running time is about 15min at that time of day, but longer at busier times. On Sundays and in the evenings Choice kindly lets TWM get on with it unhindered every 20min until about 23.45. Fares are not co-ordinated, and no agreement is needed with the OFT; despite mutual involvement in the Quality Partnership the two operators are still competitors, Choice's willingness to give change no doubt giving it an advantage to counter TWM's dominance of the route. On a short (in cognito) trip on a Choice Leyland National on another route into Walsall we also found the driver particularly polite and pleasant, but we wouldn't like to judge the operator on the strength of one brief encounter.

More to come

The next Showcase quality partnership is due to be opened in Coventry in late-July. This will be on Foleshill Road and again will involve two operators, this time Stagecoach Midland Red as well as Travel West Midlands. TWM's routes will be 20, 20A and 40 and Midland Red's 48. Involving Centro and Coventry City Council, this will include selective detection at traffic lights and a bus lane will by-pass one busy set of lights. TWM will be providing Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns in a livery described by David Leeder, possibly one of the more erudite bus company managers, as 'Mondrian neo-plasticism'. Even Stagecoach is eschewing its stripes for such a cultured approach — albeit with patches of corporate orange, red and blue on a white background!

Opposite left:
Walsall's new Showcase; Travel West Midlands Volvo B10L/Wright Liberator 1473 (R473 XDA) and a new Choice Travel Optare Excel stand at the Mossley terminus of the new Showcase routes. Contrasting with the new technology is the bus stop flag on a former trolleybus pole.
PICTURES BY THE AUTHOR

Opposite right:
Choice Travel's Showcase route is the 171; Optare excel R744 BUJ arrives at Walsall bus station.

Below left:
The Showcase concept; a new low-floor bus (a TWM Volvo B10L) at a stop with Kassel kerb and new shelter in a bus lane. Representing TWM's investment in new low-floor buses for Walsall, a Volvo B6LE passes by.

Below:
One of the new Commutaport bus shelters on the Showcase route; note how the pavement surface is textured and raised to the platform level of the bus. The red-surfaced bus stop bay is intended to deter illegal parking.

HIGH FLYI

STEPHEN MORRIS takes another look at Optare's new mini, and at progress at Optare in general

Optare may have been a little tentative in going ahead with its plans for a revolutionary low-floor minibus, but the response to the Solo so far has shown it was right to do so. With nearly 300 orders in place already, the Solo is the fastest-selling model in Optare's 13-year history. As Russell Richardson, Optare's founder and managing director, is pleased to point out, it is the first and so far only volume production low-floor small bus; other manufacturers, he knew, would follow suit, but were so far having a problem with packaging a small, low-floor bus. It was the clever packaging and other innovations such as the use of its Multiplex electrical system which ensured the Solo was the only bus to have been awarded a Millennium Award by the Prime Minister.

On the road with a Solo

Optare gave us the opportunity to try out a Solo in Leeds recently. It was one of the big batch of 85 30-seaters for Wilts & Dorset, 2614 (R614 NFX), which was ready for delivery. It confirmed our initial impressions (see last month), of a thoroughly well-sorted little bus, with most aspects of its design well thought through and excellent passenger access and appeal. The ride quality is quite outstanding; no doubt the low centre of gravity combined with air suspension helps, though good damping keeps the ride completely under control. As minibuses go it is undoubtedly the most civilised ride available in Britain.

This civility extends too to the driver; Wilts & Dorset's drivers coming off E-registered Metroriders will wonder what has hit them! Being rear-engined the engine noise is no longer a problem to the driver, and before I drove the Solo I made a point again of travelling at the rear. Noise levels for passengers too are most acceptable, though on tickover you are left in no doubt that the rear Mercedes engine is a four cylinder unit; though it doesn't exactly shake the bus you can still feel the vibration.

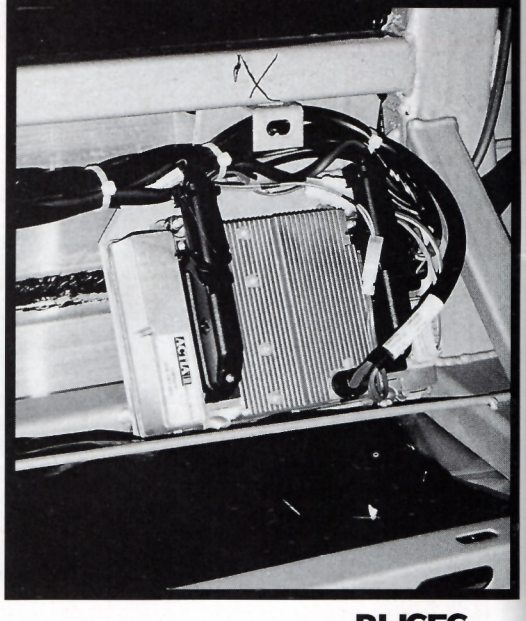
Apart from the near silence and superb ride, one of the first things that strikes you as a driver is the superb visibility afforded by the large barrel windscreen; it is virtually unimpeded. It's let down by the fact that the mirrors are awkwardly placed, very high up and viewed through the quarter lights. The sightline for them is, in fairness, unobstructed, but you do have to turn your head rather awkwardly and adjustment is tricky.

In many ways the Solo is a logical progression from the MetroRider for the driver, and the bus shares with its predecessors a very solid feeling. Drivers might question the crash protection at the front, with no engine there, but the front end structure is not, as appearances might suggest, just a single skin of glass fibre. The framing for the front end is actually on a massive scale, contributing a great deal to the overall integrity of the bus. It also incorporates the battery tray, as the front-mounted batteries help to improve weight distribution.

The driving position is commandingly high, and controls are neatly laid out, with the gear shift for the Allison AT545 box (the forthcoming small version of the World Series, the B200R, with built-in retarder will be offered when available) and spring handbrake control conveniently mounted on the offside. The handbrake, we felt, was better placed than on the MetroRider. Stalk controls are the same, with the same problem we found with the confusing mounting of the light switch on a stalk immediately beneath the indicator stalk, though other major functions such as door and kneeling controls, heating and interior lighting are on a neat little panel on the dashboard. These switches are a product of the advanced Multiplex wiring system; they require a very light touch and some can be pressed twice, for instance to bring in a second stage of the heater blowers. They also illuminate when activated. That Multiplex system greatly reduces the amount of wiring in the bus, with all functions, both body and mechanical, controlled from a central processor and six smaller units distributed around the bus. There are very few fuses and no relays; overload protection is controlled electronically. Wiring too is much reduced compared with a conventional bus.

Performance on the road was quite adequate, though the bus was empty. The same Mercedes unit seems to give adequate performance in the Vario, and acceleration was smooth and steady if not breathtaking. Breathtaking acceleration on a bus is a mixed blessing! Initial pressure on the brake pedal brings in the Telma retarder, and the transition to air brakes (they are discs on the Solo) was difficult to achieve smoothly at first, though after a while smooth stops became second nature. Indeed on our recent roadtest of the MetroRider (*Buses* June) it was notable how quickly that vehicle became second nature, and we found exactly the same with the Solo.

One wonders on occasions if manufacturers know exactly what their buses are intended to do when it comes to press driving events, and we have found ourselves batting along trunk roads and motorways in service buses never intended



to run at more than about 45mph. It came as a pleasant change therefore that Optare sent us out into Leeds traffic in the rush hour, and then let me spend half an hour or so winding around the housing estates in the Cross Gates area. This is exactly what most Solos will do for most of their working life. My expectation was that with 2.5m width and 5.5m wheelbase it would be a handful in such situations. It wasn't at all, and would probably have been better still had I not realised how long the wheelbase was, as I tended to overcompensate on tight turns; a glance in the nearside mirror showed the rear wheel well out from the kerb whenever I thought it might clip it. It was thus much better suited to tight housing estate roads than it would appear on paper — but you do have to bear in mind that the front is slightly narrower than the rest of it, and again better placed mirrors might help.

It's quite strange driving a minibus that rides so well, and that is so quiet from the driving seat — but we're not complaining on either front! The driver's environment is bright and cheerful; minibus drivers have never had it so good.

Integral production

Optare is now clearly focused on integral vehicles. This year it expects to produce 500 vehicles in total, its biggest ever in a year, and of these 80% will be integrals. Optare now recognises the Solo and Excel as its core range, finally moving it away from its original concept as a builder on other manufacturers' chassis. However it will continue to build bodies on chassis; the largest segment of this seems likely to be the Spectra, of which six step-entrance buses have recently been delivered to Eastbourne while work is due to start soon on 20 low-floor ones for Travel West Midlands. Following the experience of its first low-floor Spectra TWM has asked for greater headroom in the upper saloon, so these 20 will be built to 4.23m overall height (about 13ft 11in).

However at the time of our recent visit to Leeds, at the end of June, no double-deckers were in build and the body-on-chassis line comprised a small batch of stock-build Deltas (these could be the last Deltas as the full-size single-deck market moves to low floor, but Optare will build more if anyone asks for them) and a couple of Prismas for Black Prince. The MAN-based Vecta also remains in the catalogue.

However the Leeds factory has now been rearranged, so that most of it comprises assembly lines for Solo and Excel, and just coming off the Excel line were some of the last of 21 for Travel London, Travel West Midlands' new London subsidiary, and the first Excels to be built to 9.6m length and featuring two doors. With their full-size wheels and dual doors they look quite short and stubby, especially compared with the more familiar sleek lines of the 11.6m one-door version. These Travel London buses are 26 seaters with room for another 26 standing.

Travel West Midlands is also partly responsible for the upturn in the Solo; originally it ordered 30, but this has now been increased to 45, including 10 for London. Not having been an Optare customer before, this year Travel West Midlands will have ordered or received a total of 86 Optare vehicles (45 Solos, 21 Excels and 20 Spectras) on top of the two Spectras delivered last year.

Meanwhile MetroRider production also continues; Optare envisages that the Solo will ultimately replace it, but orders still flow in, and to accommodate them all alongside the busy Excel and Solo lines, the MetroRider is now only framed up and fitted with mechanical parts at the former Roe factory in Leeds. It is then shipped to Optare's Autobus factory at Rotherham for panelling, glazing and finishing. The first to be completed at Rotherham was for Universitybus, and a batch is being built this way for Preston.

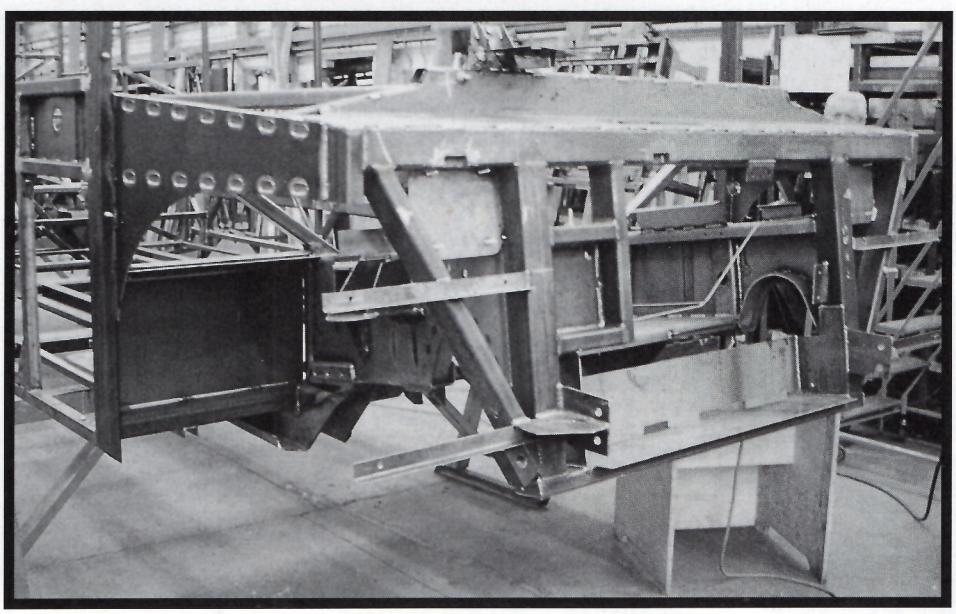
Though founded at a time when the bus industry was busily shedding capacity, in 1985, Optare is now going from strength to strength; 1998 is set to be its best year ever and currently it is seeking another 40 employees to keep up with the demand. Always one for innovation, the Solo is possibly its most innovative product yet; it has certainly got off to a good start

Opposite left:
Wilts & Dorset Optare Solo 2614, ready for delivery.
PICTURES BY STEPHEN MORRIS

Opposite right:
One of the control units for the Actia multiplex electrical system for the Solo, mounted in the cove panels. The wiring harness is reduced to a ring main and six control wires.

Below left:
A by-product of the multiplex system is this neat control panel for bodywork functions and kneeling; the buttons illuminate when activated.

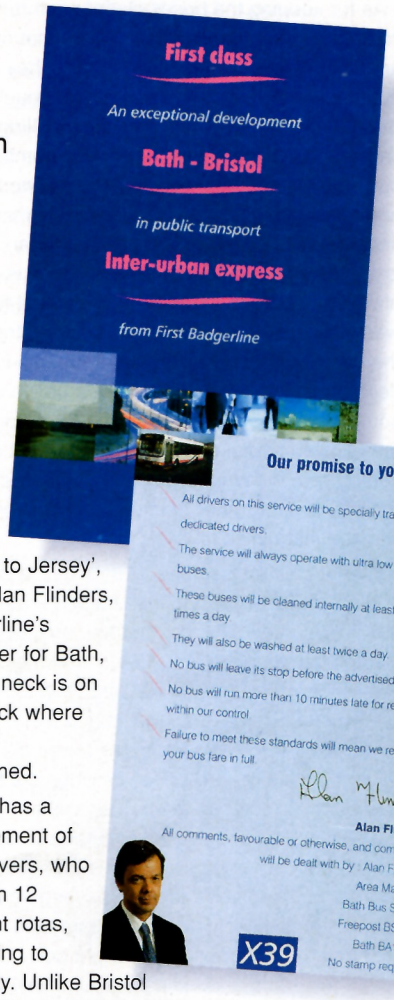
Below:
The front end structure of the Solo is much more substantial than it looks.



A day on the

X39

STEPHEN MORRIS spent a day on First Badgerline's flagship service between Bath and Bristol


First class
An exceptional development
Bath - Bristol
in public transport
Inter-urban express
from First Badgerline
Our promise to you:
All drivers on this service will be specially trained dedicated drivers.
The service will always operate with ultra low floor buses.
These buses will be cleaned internally at least four times a day.
They will also be washed at least twice a day.
No bus will leave its stop before the advertised time.
No bus will run more than 10 minutes late for reasons within our control.
Failure to meet these standards will mean we refund your bus fare in full.
Alan Flinders
All comments, favourable or otherwise, and complaints will be dealt with by : Alan Flinders
Area Manager
Bath Bus Station
Freepost BS8931
Bath BA1 1XX
No stamp required
X39

It was with some incredulity that we first heard that FirstGroup's new corporate image was only going to be applied to new buses — and even then only to new buses meeting the right criteria. It seemed a bizarre idea, having one, corporate, scheme for certain buses and keeping the old livery for others. Yet having sampled First Badgerline's recently upgraded X39 service between Bristol and Bath, it suddenly began to make sense. Indeed it seems potentially a rather more successful marketing tool than Arriva's idea of subsuming carefully-developed local marketing entities by an all-embracing scheme which wipes out not only the livery but the all-important fleetname too.

In Bristol and Bath, people know these white, pink and purple buses are Badgerline's. They still say so on the side and drivers still wear Badgerline green uniforms. But they also know that these same buses represent a higher quality of service and comfort — and if you happen to be a parent with a pushchair, when you see one of these apparitions coming down the road you know at once that you won't need to hoik Junior out of the buggy and start folding it (the pushchair, not Junior!) before you get on. The livery tells you so much more about the bus than having labels telling you it is low-floor, double-glazed, has nice seats and all the rest of it. FirstGroup's policy is to replace whole routes at one time with new buses, and the impact they make in the new livery is considerable. Badgerline's X39 is just one such route.

The X39 service

The Bristol-Bath service was completely revamped in March, with a simultaneous launch at both ends of the route performed by the respective mayors.

The towns had been linked by the half-hourly 339 service via Keynsham, the hourly X3 Frome-Bath-Bristol service and the hourly X4, from Salisbury or Warminster, which was joint with Wilts & Dorset. With the opening of the impressive Brislington park-&-ride on the way into Bristol in 1993 came equally impressive bus priorities along the A4 Bath Road, aimed primarily at making the park-&-ride work effectively (which it does), but also benefiting other local services. At that time the X4 was truncated at Bath, while the X3 continued, and the 339 was accelerated via the Keynsham bypass three times an hour and was renumbered X39, giving a quicker journey between the two centres every 15min. Keynsham itself was then served by the 337 from Bath and various services from Bristol, though in the evenings, from 19.00 when the service drops down to hourly (plus a 19.30 X39 from the Bristol end only, which allows a bus which has needed extra running time in the evening peak to get back to the garage) it reverts to a 339 and runs via Keynsham. The last service is the 23.00 from Bath, which returns from Bristol at 00.05, and gets back to the garage at about one in the morning. It then goes straight out again as the staff bus.

There is still a 'stopping' service from Bath to Bristol, the 332, which runs via Bitton and Longwell Green, but the relaunch of the X39 every 15min in March has established it as the main service between the two. At the same time the X3 finished, and was replaced by a service 267 from Frome to Bath, though passengers can buy a through ticket which will enable them to continue to Bristol on the X39.

In actual fact, X39 is not a limited-stop service; it observes all stops — giving it an advantage over the 15min train service between the two, which runs from the centre of Bath to Temple Meads, which isn't entirely central to Bristol. With the X39, passengers living on the Bristol side of Bath can get on without going into the centre of Bath, and can disembark much more centrally to Bristol than the train can manage, going some way to counterbalance the train's considerable journey time advantage.

The revamping of the service has involved replacing a random selection of vehicles — Leyland Olympians, Leyland Nationals, Bristol VRs and Dennis Lances from Badgerline's depots at Bath and Bristol — with brand new, low-floor Volvo B10BLEs with Wright Renown bodywork, of which the service requires eight. All now are run from Bath; one of the eight has to run light to Bristol to start its day's work and keep the service balanced.

A customer's charter

As part of the revamping, a customers' charter has been introduced. Leaflets were issued to passengers, and large posters on the buses set out the terms to which First Badgerline has committed itself on the service. The main points of the charter are that all journeys will be driven by trained, dedicated drivers using ultra-low-floor buses; vehicles will be cleaned inside at least four times during the day and twice externally; no bus will leave a timetable point early, nor will any bus run more than 10 minutes late for reasons within the company's control. Any breach of these conditions is met by a full refunds of passengers' fares. 'We've even sent money to Jersey', says Alan Flinders, Badgerline's manager for Bath, whose neck is on the block where X39 is concerned.

Bath has a complement of 339 drivers, who work on 12 different rotas, according to seniority. Unlike Bristol where drivers tend to prefer to work the same route day in, day out, drivers at Bath like some variety, and as a result the rota which includes the Bristol service also includes other routes, and drivers only spend part of each shift on the Bristol run. It is however the 'top link' rota, worked by the longest-serving drivers and although there are only eight buses on the service the rota comprises around 50 drivers. All have been specially trained, and Badgerline has even compiled its own training video designed at reinforcing the importance of looking after passengers properly. On the day of my visit I was to encounter four different drivers on the service, all of whom were extremely friendly and helpful. Of those only the first knew I was

Opposite:
Leaving Bath for Bristol on a wet 16 June is First Badgerline 1913 (R913 BOU), one of 10 Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLEs mainly for the X39 service.
PICTURES BY STEPHEN MORRIS

Inset left:
1910 pulls on to the stand at Marlborough Street, Bristol, for the 15.00 service back to Bath, still dripping from the wash.

Inset right:
Buses on the X39 are swept out between journeys at Bath bus station.

coming (and then only just as he clocked on in the morning) so it wasn't that they were putting on a special show for our benefit.

As for keeping the buses clean, each running card carries an instruction to drivers that on arrival at Marlborough Street, Bristol, they are to put the bus through the wash. Marlborough Street is one of those throwbacks to Tilling days, where attempts were made to combine bus stations and garages. It never did work well, and Marlborough Street is not one of Britain's finest terminii — but it does at least mean there is a wash in the entrance. In practice, it is not always possible to meet the requirement to wash the bus at the end of every round trip; there is only 10min layover, so if the bus is delayed on its way in, or there is a coach or something already waiting for the wash, drivers are allowed to make their own judgement and come down in favour of keeping the service running to time rather than complying doggedly with the instruction to wash the bus.

Interior cleaning is done at Bath bus station, and a cleaner is kept on the station throughout the working day. This has another advantage to Badgerline; garages at Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Devizes, Frome and Radstock are now outstations of Bath and having a cleaner on hand at the bus station enables buses from those outstations to be cleaned when they come into Bath. As soon as the bus arrives and passengers disembark, the cleaner boards, closes the doors and sweeps the bus out. The bus should then be ready for passengers to board five minutes before departure time, though again in practice any slight delay can erode the 10min theoretically available. One of the problems with inter-urban services is you have two urban centres, either or both of which may suddenly jam solid without warning.

Starting off

There are eight tracks on the X39, numbered 411-418, and the first two buses leave by about 05.45 to pick up the 06.00 service from Bath and 06.30 from Bristol. Duty 418 is quite a leisurely start; sign-on time at Bath depot, a mile or so outside the town centre, is 07.52. The driver's duty comprises only one round trip on the X39, before a meal break and then moves on to the Keynsham service for the rest of the day, finishing at before 17.00 — hardly onerous by the standards of today's bus industry. That particular track is hardly onerous for an expensive new bus either; its last run is the 17.15 back from Bristol, and traffic permitting the bus should be back home by 18.15, less than 10½ hours since it set off in the morning. It's the lightest duty of the day.

Thus I found myself at Bath garage at about 07.45, to meet the driver, Mike 'Radar' Reader. Radar, despite his youthful looks, has 25 years' service, and compares the Bristol MWs on which he started ('Spaceships' as the drivers call them, with varying levels of fondness) somewhat unfavourably with the Volvo B10BLE.

Bath comprises a large open parking area and a substantial workshop, in which seemed to be an inordinate number of Bristol VRTs. It is a mixed fleet; though the B10BLEs saw off the last of the Leyland Nationals, there are still 27 VRs — mainly W-registration and including eight open-toppers — in its fleet of about 180 vehicles, which also comprises Plaxton and Wright-bodied Dennis Lances (the latter SLFs), some late-model standard Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers, Leyland Olympians, Mercedes minibuses and the Streamline fleet, taken over in April 1997. Both Badgerline and Streamline provide a special service for the Universities in Bath, the Big Orange, which has Dennis Lances and even some Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220s suitably painted. The DAFs came with Streamline.

Bath has 10 B10BLEs (they are also used on town service 14) and there were still two in when we arrived. 1912 (R912 BOU) was our bus, and Radar started the engine before doing the daily checks. 'No point in checking it if it won't start', he said. It did, instantly, and within seconds at idle it had built up sufficient air pressure. Lights etc were checked over, Radar placed his module into the Wayfarer 3 ticket machine and keyed in his identity, route number etc, then checked the setting of the blinds. The standard FirstGroup specification calls for dot matrix number indicators, front, side and rear, set from a control panel to the right of the driver's head, and roller blinds for the destination. These couldn't be simpler on the X39, just 'Bristol' and 'Bath', in dayglo yellow lettering. Bath in particular is in huge letters, filling the destination box. You are certainly left in no doubt where the bus is going, and the blinds have a clarity as yet totally beyond the capability of more sophisticated electronic systems.

These buses are impressive, there are no two ways about it. They have 47 seats, most of them a high backed version of the standard FirstGroup seat, which is not only attractively upholstered in FirstGroup's purple-based moquette, but is also more comfortable than the average bus seat. The FirstGroup standard interior blends pastel shades and light colours to give a bright but restful interior. Whether you like it or not (I do, but it's a matter of personal taste), it does at least give the impression that thought has been given to creating a co-ordinated interior, and nothing has been left to chance. Sitting at the front, engine noise was a distant murmur and there was no detectable vibration. The B10BLE has independent front suspension; beam axles are simpler but do transmit some road shocks to the interior when they are so close to the floor as is needed on a low-floor bus. Ride quality on the Volvo was exceptional.

On the road

Traffic was already heavy on the way into Bath, but we eased on to stand 16 at Bath bus station at 08.10, in nice time for the 08.15 departure. Though the bus was clean, I noticed it hadn't been swept out the night before — there were still tickets from yesterday on the floor. There were 16 passengers already waiting, including a sizeable contingent for St Brendan's sixth-form college at Brislington, and a fair number of tourists, two of whom were heading for Cardiff and were anxious to know what time the X39 would get them to Bristol for an onward connection. Though the bus is due in at 09.05, Radar could make no promises. The Monday of that week he had sailed through (it was the day of England's first game in the World Cup, when a mystery 24hr virus swept the country's workforce!), though yesterday it had taken him nearly an hour and a half to get to Bristol, due to the weight of traffic. Today, things were working much better and we had an easy run out of the town.

Boarding of the 16 passengers was quite snappy; all of Badgerline's buses have magnetic card readers for a range of off-bus tickets, and five of our boarding passengers used those, while some of the students had conventional passes. Of the others, a number had large denomination notes, which Radar changed without showing any of the grumpiness which often greets such a requirement, despite this being the first run of the day. Like many drivers he comes prepared with his own float; few bus companies furnish their drivers with one these days.

We backed off the stand at precisely 08.15; these days there is no inspector to whistle you off, again in common with many places, and with buses on either side of you the driver is dependent on no-one behind doing anything silly. Buses coming into the station have to give way to buses backing out.

Despite this being peak time, the streets on the way out of Bath were deserted. A couple of passengers disembarked before we got to the A4 — it's very much a local service as well as an interurban one, and five more boarded at various points — four with magnetic cards and one school pass — and we reached the main road comfortably at 08.29, allowing a gentle run along the dual carriageway at just under 40mph, though traffic coming into Bath was very heavy indeed.

Two more passengers with magnetic cards were picked up, and we arrived at Saltford, a town about half way between Bath and Bristol, at 08.33, where Radar paused for a minute to wait for time. However when we got to the Keynsham by-pass Radar obviously knew there would be delays ahead, and opened the B10BLE up to its top speed of 56mph. The bus romped along smoothly and silently, seeming almost to relish this chance to show its paces. He was right to take the chance to make up a bit of time, because the end of the dual carriageway, just before the Brislington park-&-ride, is a notorious bottleneck at this time of day and was jammed solid, as two lanes of heavy traffic battled it out to get into one.

Though FirstGroup has invested huge sums in new buses for the service, there is no element of quality partnership. Bath and Bristol are now in different unitary authorities — Bath & North East Somerset and Bristol — which have different attitudes to bus priority. There is the promise of priorities to come in Bath, though the A4 in Bristol is particularly well-provided for bus lanes. This starts as you approach the park-&-ride at Brislington, enabling buses heading straight on for Bristol to share the left turn lane with cars heading for the park-&-ride, with a bus gate to get them through the point where cars have to turn left. We stopped by the park-&-ride to allow 10 students for St Brendan's to disembark. Something of the success of the park-&-ride was evident as two CityLine Volvo Olympians in the smart Pride livery pulled out ahead of us, both laden to the gunwales — a good 150 passengers between them.

Thereafter there are good bus priorities down Brislington Hill — except that a van had parked right in the approach to it, so we had to battle into the solid traffic in the offside lane to get round it, costing us a good few minutes and adding to the problems of the rest of the traffic. Alan Flinders tells us that only the police can deal with bus lane violations; traffic wardens have no jurisdiction over them. Surely there must be better ways to enforce bus lanes than using scarce police resources in this way? Indeed in every stretch of bus lane heading into Bristol we saw cars sneaking in, pretending to have a left turn to make and then battling back into the traffic at the end of the lanes. Nevertheless the bus lanes did give us considerable advantage over the rest of the near-stationary traffic.

We set down passengers in various parts of Bristol's outskirts, and picked up a few passengers going into town, all of whom paid cash. Roadworks to remodel a major junction near Temple Meads, involving the demolition of a flyover, threatened to delay us; as we approached all looked chaotic, though we got through remarkably quickly, and in fact they caused us no problems that day. Five passengers alighted in the centre of Bristol, and we swept into Marlborough Street at 09.09, only four minutes adrift. Our Cardiff-bound passengers were very grateful.

One feature of the new FirstGroup specification is that the heating and ventilation is controlled by a thermostat on the ceiling, halfway along the bus; this did not work terribly effectively on 1912 and the bus was soon uncomfortably warm and stuffy. Apparently this problem afflicted all the batch when delivered, though adjustment of the thermostats has cured the problem on some vehicles. Not 1912, though, and on arrival at Marlborough Street Radar got out of his seat and opened some windows. 'I can only control my own heating', he told me; there are no controls in the cab for saloon heating.

A coach was parked awkwardly at the entrance to the bus wash, and we had only six minutes to pull on to the stand, have a quick break, load up and set off again, so we forewent the wash. Despite it being a foul day, the B10BLE still looked smart enough.

At 09.13 the doors were opened and seven passengers boarded, three of them using the card reader, and at 09.15 precisely we backed off the stand. Again St Brendan's supplied us with some of our passengers, including some who boarded on the way out of town, and as the rain lashed down ever heavier we dropped five off there. As we headed out of Bristol, although it was well after 09.30, the traffic at the end of

Opposite:
1912 at Bath depot prior to starting its duty that day.

Above:
The morning peak along the A4 into Bristol, and a van blocks our way on to the tantalisingly empty bus lane.

the dual-carriageway section of A4 heading into Bristol was still at a standstill, but we swept by on the other side. It was an easy run back into Bath, though on the way in we picked up our first push-chair of the day. Low-floor buses certainly make it easier for parents with pushchairs and other impedimenta, and we actually got back to the bus station at 10.05, having to pull into the Keynsham bay as we had caught up with the previous departure, which had obviously been affected more by Bristol's traffic than we had.

As soon as we landed the cleaner jumped aboard and swept the bus out thoroughly, following it up with a mop and leaving the interior sparkling. Radar went off for his meal break, and the 10.00 departure finally got away at 10.12. It was hardly worth our new driver moving the bus on to the correct stand at that time; we were due away at 10.15. An on-time departure was made, with just one passenger aboard, and he alighted in the suburbs of Bath. That was it for the entire run; we scarcely exceeded 30mph on our very sedate journey, and obviously the delayed 10.00 service was doing all the work for us. We never saw another passenger, enabling us to pull up outside Marlborough Street slightly ahead of time, despite our driver's efforts to shed a few minutes here and there, and a nasty road accident on Bristol Hill, descending from Brislington, cost us only a few seconds.

The fresh air from the open windows certainly made this a more comfortable journey. Again our driver decided not to take the bus through the wash; the rain had been so heavy as to keep the bus looking clean rather than spattering it with mud, and it was an easy run back. Five passengers boarded at Marlborough Street and only four more were picked up in the course of the journey, resulting in a spot on time arrival in Bath at 12.05.

Above:
Badgerline's buses are fitted with magnetic card readers, one of which was to give us problems on one journey.

The afternoon shift

After a lunch break and some time to take a few photographs, I joined another B10BLE, 1910 on the 14.00 departure. Over lunchtime Bath's traffic had livened up considerably, coming to a complete standstill at one point and causing disruption to the service. Thus it was only just before 14.00 that our next bus arrived at the bus station. Nevertheless it still got its clean out and 15 passengers had boarded by 14.01, when the driver selected reverse. No sooner had he done so than four more passengers rolled up, and we were two or three minutes down getting out of the bus station. Awkwardly parked vehicles made it difficult to squeeze out, and with a certain amount of coming and going of passengers on the way out of Bath, the Volvo's performance was called upon to make up a bit of time on the dual carriageway. The heating and ventilation was much better set up than on 1912, with cool air blowing down the double-glazed windows keeping things at a very pleasant temperature, and cutting in and out automatically at intervals. One could almost think it was air conditioning.

The Renown assessed

By now I had travelled sufficiently on the Renowns to come to some sort of judgement as to their suitability for this sort of work. Low-floor buses on the face of it seem unnecessary for interurban work, yet with a high proportion of elderly passengers, plus a number of backpackers, so far a couple of pushchairs and one shopping trolley, the low floor design had proved its worth. The Wright/B10BLE combination is actually very good; the back end of the Volvo chassis is still quite low, despite its simpler design compared with the B10L, though it does have the drawback thereby of needing rear-facing seats over the rear wheelarches. On the plus side the back end does not tower unpleasantly over the front end; there is just one step up, and there are more rows of seats reached with no step at all than there were on the Travel West Midlands Wright-bodied Volvo B10L on which I had travelled the previous day in Walsall.

The Renown relies on a ramped floor in the front part to achieve both a low step up to the rear and to get round the need for bonded glazing — the ramped floor structure provides the requisite strength, though FirstGroup's double-glazing is glued-in to give that attractive swathe of glass for the sake of the bus's appearance. Surely the ramped floor is cheating? Well, I for one had forgotten the floor *was* ramped, so imperceptible is it, and I doubt anyone else noticed it either. Generally the interior layout is neat and tidy, and seated in the front part of the bus you didn't get the impression of being uncomfortably close to the ground. Passengers could be heard commenting favourably on the bus — though one learned person was holding forth on the unsuitability of blue for the seats, as, she reckoned, it causes travel sickness. I've also heard the same argument used against green seats; these days I tend to feel queasy if I read on our local Dennis Darts, but had been making notes on these Volvos all day without a hint of sickness. Such was the ride quality that I could read my notes too!

The ride quality of the Volvo is indeed superb, performance is first rate, with plenty of power for hill climbing and for getting on with the job when road conditions allow. Yet acceleration is as smooth as silk, as are gearchanges from the ZF 5HP400 and, apart from one near emergency stop, braking too was very smooth. How much of the smoothness is down to Badgerline's drivers it is difficult to tell; certainly all four drivers that day were first rate and highly skilled. All were excellent with the passengers too — at least on those journeys when we carried any!

If like me you're used to travelling on Dennis Darts, then the heavier construction and bigger engine of the Volvo comes as a pleasing change; it feels a solid bus and though engine noise is very subdued, even when you sit on top of it. There is something reassuring about having 9.6litres of engine working away effortlessly, the greatest source of noise being the turbocharger whistling away like a railway locomotive. Mind you with an unladen weight of nearly 10.5tonnes for the 47-seat Volvo, economics probably favour the Dart!

But in FirstGroup trim, with that light yet subdued interior and very comfortable seating it was very civilised way to travel, and all four drivers thought the vehicles were marvellous. 'You get out of one of these after four hours, and you only feel like you've been driving an hour', said one.

Back to the route . . .

Again it was an uneventful journey, and we arrived at Marlborough Street by 14.49, in time to take the bus through the wash, and pulled straight on to the stand at 14.52, in plenty of time to leave at 15.00. However our first disaster of the day struck, when one of the eight boarding passengers put a magnetic card into the reader and it jammed. An inspector was called out from his control room on the station concourse, and rapidly dismantled the machine to release the card. Thus it was 15.02 when we left, and the machine jammed again when we picked up two passengers at The Centre in Bristol. The card was retrieved, but the machine had refused to debit his 10-journey discount card and the passenger very graciously paid cash for the journey.

By now traffic was building up well and it was a slow pull out of Bristol. The bus lanes along the A4 out of Bristol are active only after 16.00, and cars are allowed to park in them for the

shops at Brislington. Thus we had the worst of all worlds; heavy traffic and yet the priority was blocked by legally parked cars. Traffic was bad at the park-&-ride site too, as it was at the end of the Keynsham by-pass. Fortunately the run into Bath itself was easy and we were only three minutes late arriving at the bus station, and after a driver change the bus was ready for departure at 16.00, having again been swept out.

There was a good crowd for the bus at Bath, and by the time 20 passengers had boarded we were two minutes late setting back from the stand. Another eight boarded at other town centre stops, and nine passengers, including six schoolchildren, used the bus only as a local service within Bath. Fortunately the magnetic card reader seemed to have settled itself down again. Traffic going into Bristol was building up well, and the bus lanes certainly proved their worth for sweeping past traffic queues, giving an arrival at Marlborough Street only two minutes late.

The 17.00 service was to show up some of the weaknesses of using low-floor single-deckers on busy routes; naturally this was to be the busiest journey of the day, and 21 passengers were waiting as the bus pulled on to the stand, of which I was the last. All the forward-facing window seats were occupied, leaving me the choice of one of the side-facing perch seats at the front, rear-facing tip-ups or the rear facing seats over the rear wheelarches, rubbing knees with other passengers. None seemed desirable, and yet sitting next to another passenger when there was an alternative seemed somehow 'not quite the thing'. I settled for the 'death seat' in the middle at the back, a seat I've never favoured after seeing an elderly lady catapulted the full length of a Mancunian due to the antics of an idiot in a car.

Just before departure another four arrived with a small child in a pushchair, vindicating my decision not to use one of the front tip-ups. These late arrivals delayed our 17.00 departure by a minute, and at the Centre stop 13 more passengers boarded, followed by seven more at the next stop and by Temple Meads we had seven standing — despite one or two of the 'less desirable' rear-facing seats and one of the rear five being unoccupied.

This time the bus lanes up Bristol Hill had been cleared of parked cars. It took us seven minutes from Arnos Castle to battle the half-mile on to the bus lane, but once on it we sailed up the hill, sweeping past the long line of stationary traffic. Sixteen local passengers disembarked in the Brislington area, so the bus became more comfortable. However while baby buggy traffic is great off peak, it's not so desirable at peak hours, and the push-chair-bound youngster at the front obviously took exception to being packed into a bus in this way, and probably wanted its tea, and was tuning up well. By Brislington it was howling inconsolably. Whether Steven Norris had sub-one-year-olds in mind when referring to 'awful human beings' on public transport I know not — politicians are supposed to like babies, but he was never one for political correctness — but the smallest occupant of the bus certainly contributed far more to the stress levels of the commuting masses than any other factor of that journey, and there was a collective sigh of relief when the family disembarked at the Brislington park-&-ride. What a shame the planners took fright at extending the bus lane right up to the traffic lights there; it would have saved us another three or four minutes, and, under the circumstances, a lot of jangled nerves. We also gained eight more passengers, one of whom had to stand, though four disembarked at the beginning of the Keynsham by-pass and the bus emptied progressively thereafter.

That journey should have been in Bath bus station by 17.50, though during the week it seems highly unlikely it ever achieves it; we were only passing the Newbridge park-&-ride on the town's outskirts by then. Bath town centre was not much easier than Bristol's city centre had been. Much of the congestion turned out to be due to one youth in a Volkswagen Polo who saw no reason not to park on yellow lines right on a road junction so he could have a chat with his mates, and we swung out of the traffic and into the bus station at 18.06. The cleaner had gone home by now, so the bus didn't get swept out, but it wasn't too bad inside anyway despite the number of passengers it had carried.

The evening service from Bath has begun to run down by this time; there is no 18.00 departure and the in-coming 17.00 from Bristol forms the 18.15 departure instead, giving it 25min recovery time, of which 16 had been used up in the traffic congestion. That is then the last X39 departure from Bath; the hourly 339s start at 19.00, and the 18.15 comes back as the last X39, 19.30 from Bristol, again allowing another 25min recovery time at the other end of the route. Most other X39s running into Bath during the peak then come off service, leaving just two vehicles to maintain the evening service.

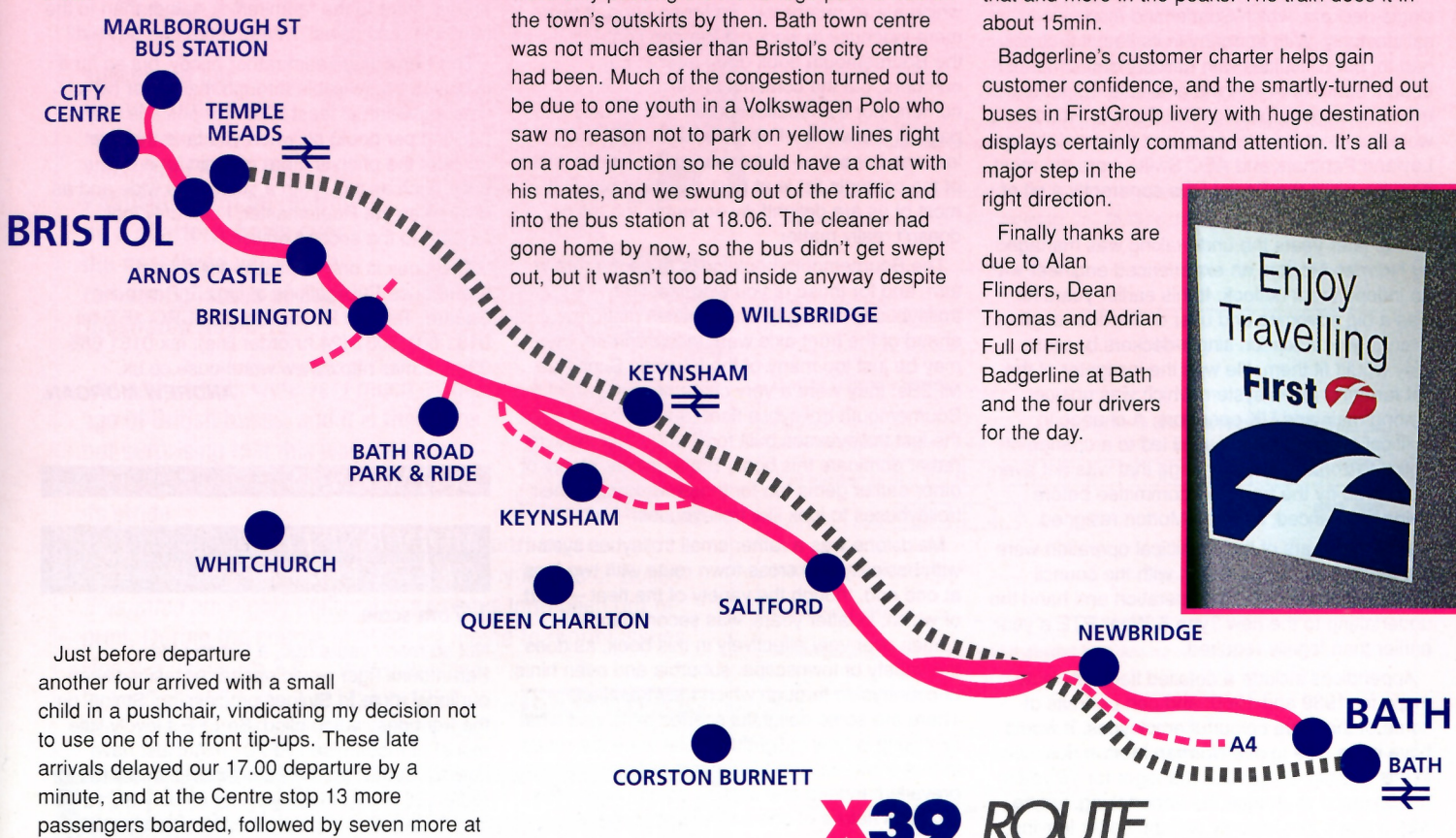
Conclusion

FirstGroup has certainly been brave, going against the trend of recent years, to come up with such a high specification for its standard buses. It is certainly a worthwhile exercise; improving amenities for passengers is essential if a switch to public transport is going to be sustained — if it can be achieved in the first place. The X39 is a service which shows something of what can be done with good rolling stock and bus priority, though it is too early yet to tell whether a pattern of growth is emerging as a result of the improvements. Bus priorities are essential and aid the process, but yet braver measures need to be put in to ensure buses can get through the real pinch points — and enforcement needs to be addressed.

The Volvo/Wright combination is also appealing to passengers, provided it can supply adequate capacity to meet the peaks. Maybe there is scope though to speed up the X39 off-peak; 50min for the journey from Bristol to Bath is still a lot, even if the bus needs all that and more in the peaks. The train does it in about 15min.

Badgerline's customer charter helps gain customer confidence, and the smartly-turned out buses in FirstGroup livery with huge destination displays certainly command attention. It's all a major step in the right direction.

Finally thanks are due to Alan Flinders, Dean Thomas and Adrian Full of First Badgerline at Bath and the four drivers for the day.



X39 ROUTE

Reviews

SUNDERLAND CORPORATION BUSES 1928-73

DAVID WAYMANN. NORTHEAST PRESS. 120pp £9.95

The economics of mainstream publishing mean that many medium-sized bus undertakings are never likely to have a glossy, well-illustrated book about them. This book is therefore to be welcomed. It represents remarkable value for money, even though it uses matt paper and lower-cost printing techniques. That said, most of the pictures have reproduced surprisingly well.

In terms of volume of information supplied the book is also excellent value. It covers routes and vehicles in detail yet has also dug out a wealth of detail on vehicle prices, passenger numbers and operating costs of individual routes and much more. Surprisingly, such detail was not available for the later years of the undertaking, and precise dates for route changes and other information are apparently not known.

Sunderland was later than many tram operators in trying buses, flirted with the idea of trolleybuses, but did not begin tram replacement until well after World War 2. Under successive managers it was a lean, well-run undertaking, with some of the lowest fares and operating costs in the country.

It was an early user of Daimler double-deckers with Gardner engines and preselector gearboxes, kept some of its wartime buses a remarkably long time, and later embraced one-man operation and flat fares in a pioneering way. That was with a huge new, and mixed, fleet of rear-engined single-deckers, which Sunderland made work satisfactorily. With so many in its fleet it probably had to, but difficulties with delivery dates meant it bought some of everything available. Experiences from this were surprising. The Daimler Roadliners were the most troublesome, and the most thirsty. Leyland Panthers and AEC Swifts were the most popular, while the Bristol REs apparently a bit of a 'disappointment'.

In its later years the undertaking was managed by Norman Morton, an experienced engineer with an independent outlook. In his earlier years he was a big advocate and user of Gardner engines, even buying Atkinson single-deckers because they would fit them. He was the instigator of the flat fare and token system which was unique among mainland UK operators. A change in political control of the council led to a change of policy to zonal fares, a change that was not even discussed by the transport committee before being announced. Norman Morton resigned.

The final years of the municipal operation were not particularly happy either, with the council deciding to opt out of bus operation and hand the undertaking to the new Tyne & Wear PTE a year earlier than legally required.

Appendices include a detailed fleet list, route maps for 1939 and 1960, and pen portraits of some of the more colourful employees. It would have been nice to see Norman Morton described in this section: as general manager for 15 years he did much to change the undertaking, yet he was a loner, increasingly unhappy after leaving, and died in tragic circumstances.

Sunderland was by no means a typical municipal operation. For remarkably little money this book tells you how and why.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

TROLLEYBUS CLASSICS

No4 — MAIDSTONE, by ROBERT J. HARLEY. No6 — BOURNEMOUTH, by MALCOLM N. PEARCE. MIDDLETON PRESS. 96pp each. £11.95 each

Such is the delightful nature of these books that you find yourself forgiving their little idiosyncracies. They are pictorial books, and yet sometimes the picture quality is not all it might be; the Bournemouth one is OK if you don't look at it too closely, while some of the pictures in the Maidstone book technically should never have seen the light of day — but they have, and actually for all that a few of them are quite unsharp or sometimes poorly composed they actually capture the atmosphere of the times — usually the 1950s — very well. As is often the case the earlier photos are better; the scene is set for Maidstone with a 1904 picture of newly-delivered tramcar No 5 that is as crisp as anything. One can imagine the photographer carting tons of equipment to take the picture, whereas his counterparts in the 1950s probably made do with a Box Brownie, and it shows.

You can also forgive the delightfully eccentric contents pages. After a while, you realise that the numbers in the contents of the Maidstone book refer not to the pages, but to the photographs which are all numbered. So far so good. It takes more ingenuity to work out that the contents list in the Bournemouth book does refer to page numbers, but the contents are listed in neither numeric nor alphabetical order, and as only one page in the whole of either book — p96, the very last one in each — is numbered, the usefulness of the contents list is at best questionable. But most of us are delightfully eccentric too, so it doesn't really matter.

The Bournemouth book looks at each route in turn, and for those of you who feel that trolleybuses belong to an era when platforms ahead of the front axle were inappropriate, there may be just too many of the futuristic Sunbeam MF2Bs; they were a very characteristic part of the Bournemouth trolleybus fleet (and historic too, as the last trolleybuses built for Britain), but they do rather dominate this book. But there are plenty of other earlier gems too for those who prefer their trolleybuses to look like trolleybuses.

Maidstone was a rather small trolleybus system, with basically one cross-town route with two legs at one end, though the variety of the fleet — part of which, in latter years, was secondhand — comes over very effectively in this book, as does the variety of townscape, suburbia and even hints of countryside through which they travelled. There are some delightful scenes here, and what is striking is how delightfully quiet were the roads in that south-eastern town when trolleybuses prevailed. Indeed one caption comments on the peaceful nature of one scene where now is traffic chaos, courtesy of a Safeways superstore. It just makes you yearn for the tranquility of times past — or it does if you are of a nostalgic inclination, anyway.

These books are a tad pricey, though your £11.95 does include postage and packing from Middleton Press, Easebourne Lane, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9AZ, and they are rather appealing.

STEPHEN MORRIS

THE CLASSIC ROUTEMASTER BUS ILLUSTRATED

LIZZIE & PAT WARE. WAREHOUSE PUBLICATIONS. 210 x 210mm. 80pp. £14.50 (£17.50 overseas)

This new book is unusual in many ways. It is a book where you can play spot the difference between various vehicles as well as spotting various members vehicles. The photographs were taken at rallies, including at the 1997 RMOOA rally at Shoreham with many vehicles with the Ian Allan/Classic Bus blinds on display, or on the streets of London in the summer of 1997. With a class of vehicle as varied as the Routemaster (who said it was standardised?) don't expect 150 photographs to show every variation of the RM or detail on the RM.

There are no captions but the quality of most photographs is excellent. In addition to the normal style photographs, numerous pages are devoted to illustrating the variations in detail between vehicles, such as rear number plates, fuel caps, radiator badges, front wings, the position of fleet names and head lamp panels. There are four pages of text briefly describing the history of the Routemaster to date; however not every detail is 100% correct; but then four pages is a very quick precis of some 44 years.

As the foreword states — 'this book is a visual tribute to one of London's enduring icons . . . The Routemaster deserves more careful study . . . a piece of classic industrial design . . . observed rather than catalogued . . . the book is likely to appeal more to the "admirer" . . .rather than to the hard-line "enthusiast"'. What more can be said?

This book may seem rather pricey, but so far it is only to be available through mail order (which must be worth at least £2.00 for postage and packing per book) so when you take this into account the price is more realistic for a colour book such as this. With a subject as wide and as diverse as the Routemaster, I can only look forward to the second edition.

This book is only available direct from Warehouse Publications at Unit 5, Rathbone Square, Tanfield Road, Croydon CRO 1BT, tel 0181 681 3031 (24 hr order line), fax 0181 686 2362, e.mail http://www.warehouse.co.uk.

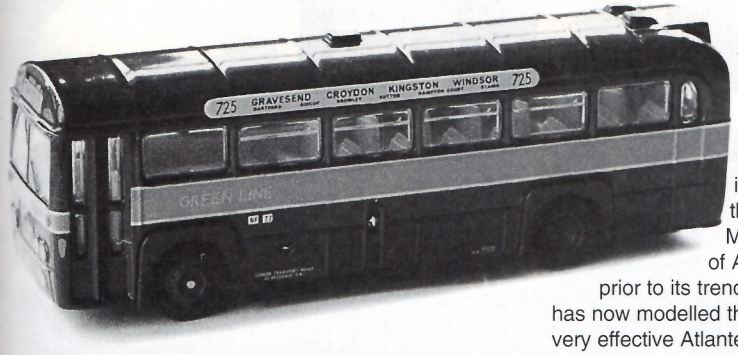
ANDREW MORGAN.

EFE MODELS

MODERNISED GREEN LINE RF

1/76th scale

Not so many years ago, a Green Line Paramount/Tiger would appear occasionally on our local route to Staines proclaiming 'Stains' on the front destination blind. So EFE's lovely little model of modernised RF201 might just have carried 'Stains' on the side destination boards for route 725 — but then again it probably didn't. Luckily the lettering is so small it doesn't



glare at you too much and otherwise this is an excellent model.

In all its versions EFE's RF model has been particularly well-executed and has become much sought-after. It has stood up to modernisation very well, with a new front end with twin headlights, a new windscreen, curved back in proper style, though not terribly well fitted on the review sample, and broad pale green band. This is convincingly edged in silver paint, which does look like beading unless you examine it very closely indeed. The yellow destination boards, give or take the odd mis-spelling, are convincing and it carries a garage code (for Northfleet) and running number. Gold legal lettering is not quite right, but it seems churlish to nit-pick on such an attractive model.

STEPHEN MORRIS

MANCHESTER-STYLE ATLANTEAN

1/76th scale

One of Manchester City Transport's 1963 batch of Daimler Fleetlines was a little different from the rest. It had forced ventilation and a new, improved front with a single-piece curved windscreen and restyled dash panel. It looked much smarter than the other, flat-fronted buses in the batch and was to form the prototype for all of Manchester's later deliveries of Atlanteans and Fleetlines, prior to its trend-setting Mancunians. EFE has now modelled this style, as a derivative of its very effective Atlantean/MCW model, as Manchester Leyland Atlantean 3736 (BND 736C).

Unfortunately EFE's is based on the highbridge Atlantean, whereas Manchester's were on the lowheight PDR1/2 chassis and were built to an intermediate height (14ft 2in if memory serves) and as a result it's not quite convincing. The new front end moulding works remarkably well — temptation would have been to make it too curvy, as the curves in the front end and the windscreen where actually flatter than the initial impression suggested. This has been resisted, and the curves are just about spot on. But the relative height of the destination boxes, windscreen and so on is not right for the Manchester vesion, and the standard opening windows are not correct for Manchester's bizarre ideas on opening windows at this time, which were so much a part of the character of those vehicles.

The interior is brown, which is correct for the upper deck of 3736, though its lower saloon would have been upholstered in green moquette — later buses had red seats on both decks. There are lots of other details a nitpicking Mancunian like the reviewer finds wrong, like the divided windows in the doors and at the rear and the wrong positions for the fleetnumbers. On the plus side Manchester's 'threepenny bit' routenumbers are well reproduced. For this Mancunian, the model doesn't quite work, which is a shame as it's a good try. It will probably work much better as, for example, a Devon General bus, which was full height and had sensible opening windows. That's on the way, and we look forward to it.

STEPHEN MORRIS

SPECIAL READER OFFER

Following the success of our limited edition reprint of *Buses Illustrated No 1*, Ian Allan Publishing will be reprinting, on a quarterly basis over the next three years, the remaining issues of *Buses Illustrated* Nos 2-12.

The early 1950s were very much a golden age of British buses, and it is therefore not surprising that this was the time *Buses Illustrated* was also getting into its stride.

Edited by one of the best-known transport experts of this time, Charles S. Dunbar, these early issues of *Buses Illustrated* are highly collectable and have long been out of print. During the course of 1998 we intend to reprint issues Nos 2-5. Issue No 2 was first published in Jan/Feb 1950, No 3 in March 1950, No 4 in April 1950 and No 5 in May 1950.

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BFILL03

PICTUR

Double-deckers have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity of late, with all three of the major groups placing significant numbers in service up and down the country. The continued supremacy of Volvo's Olympian, apparent in these views, is under threat from its rivals' low-floor models, such as the DAF DB250 RS, both the basis for the Optare Spectra, and the recipient of 91 Alexander ALX400 bodies for Arriva's London subsidiaries. First examples of the Plaxton President body, for Capital Logistics, are also expected to appear on this chassis.

The first two examples of two axle-Dennis Tridents for the home market, with bodies by East Lancs and Alexander are nearing completion, but few hard facts are yet known about Volvo's contender, the company having embarked upon a change of direction particularly with regard to the positioning of the drive train, following the early appearance of a low-floor double-deck 'concept' chassis.

REVIEW

DOUBLE-DECK DELIVERIES

Opposite above:
Stagecoach has favoured Alexander-bodied long-wheelbase Olympians of late. VA122 (R122 EVX), of Stagecoach Selkent is seen in picturesque surroundings at Westerham, Kent.
MARK LYONS

Opposite below:
Arriva's Olympians carry the traditionally-styled Palatine I bodywork by Northern Counties. Seen here in Leicester is 4620 (R620 MNU) of Arriva (Fox County), formerly Midland Fox.
RUSSELL YOUNG

Above left:
First new double-deckers in the Exeter area since before deregulation are four Olympians for Stagecoach Devon, of which three are of the long-wheelbase type. Seen here in Exeter is 902 (R902 JDV).
MARK BAILEY

Left:
FirstGroup has placed many Volvo Olympians with either Northern Counties Palatine II, or Alexander Royale bodywork in service of late, most notably in Scotland, such as R663 DUS of First Glasgow, a Northern Counties-bodied example.
MAX FOWLER

Above:
With the current trend towards corporate identities threatening to reintroduce the uniformity of National Bus Company days, it is important to remember that a significant number of flourishing independents still exist . Resolutely-so Wilts & Dorset, a major Optare customer, has recently taken delivery of three low-floor Spectras. 3155 (R155 NPR), awaits its next tour of duty at Salisbury bus station.
MARK LYONS

DEVON DE

Preservation

Above:
Carmel Coaches' Albion Victor regularly operates route 174 between Okehampton and Moretonhampstead.

Left:
Ex-Portsmouth no2 (LRV 992), an MCW-bodied Leyland PD2/12 is currently owned by Stagecoach Devon. It was acquired by Transit Holdings from short-lived Stagecoach Portsmouth following the enforced sale of the latter subsidiary. Retained by Transit Holdings, when its Portsmouth Blue Admiral operation was sold to FirstGroup, no2 was transferred to Oxford, where it briefly operated a Blenheim Palace service. Following the Stagecoach takeover of that operation, it was transferred to Devon, and painted . . .

South Devon — an area renowned for its natural beauty, its weather, not to mention its cream teas and a lot more besides — has always been a place to visit for those with an interest in transport. Whether in the past to watch and to photograph the Great Western's finest, as it threaded its way along the sea wall at Dawlish, to savour the rich red and cream-liveried vehicles of the Devon General Omnibus & Touring Company, or, in more recent times, to study the area's pioneering efforts in promoting the minibus. Such is the pace of change in the world of transport in the closing stages of the twentieth century, that even the last mentioned is history today.

Old buses at Oldway

This year the Devon General Society held its annual rally in the grounds of Oldway Mansion, Paignton. Oldway is set in 17 acres of beautiful, landscaped gardens, and was built as the home of Isaac Merritt Singer of sewing machine fame. Situated in Preston, on the main Torquay-Paignton road, Oldway is ideally suited as a location for such an event. Sponsored this year by *Classic Bus* and Stagecoach Devon, the rally boasted good attendance in all respects.

Aside from the static display, it was possible to take a ride on either circular route 63 via Preston Down Road, affording excellent views across Torbay, or along the seafront on route 12D. Appropriate open-top buses were provided for the latter. Two 'Sea Dog'-class ex-Devon General Leyland Atlanteans, 931/2 GTA reliving their younger years by retracing what was for them a well-trodden path, were joined for the first time by ex-Portsmouth no2 (LRV 992), an MCW-bodied Leyland PD2/12, currently owned by Stagecoach Devon, and unlike the two 'Sea Dogs', not blessed with a livery appropriately reflecting its heritage (see left — no further comment necessary!).

As one would expect, several other ex-Devon General buses attended, amongst them HUO 510, a splendid Weymann-bodied AEC Regal III saloon, MTT 640, an all-Leyland lowbridge PD2, NTT 661, a well-presented Weymann-bodied AEC Regent III, NTT 679, another Regent III, but unusually fitted with a tin front, and carrying the

LIGHTS

PHILIP LAMB visited the Torbay Classic Bus & Coach gathering on 7 June. Author's photographs.

prototype Weymann Aurora body, XUO 721, an ex-Royal Blue ECW-bodied Bristol MW6G, which, under the auspices of the National Bus Company, was converted to a bus and transferred to Devon General, LUO 47F, an AEC Reliance, bodied in BET-style by Willowbrook and last, but not least KTT 42P, a Bristol LH6L in its first season as a preserved bus.

Not only Devon General, but also . . .

Other local operators represented included Plymouth with two contrasting vehicles — Weymann-bodied Leyland PD1A, DDR 414, and East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean ATK 156W, maintained by the company for special services, on display. Former fellow Devon municipal, Exeter Corporation once operated a fleet of smart green and cream buses, many of which were, like Leyland PD2A, 88 GFJ, (still owned by Exeter City Council), bodied by Massey. The Western National Preservation Group brought along its lovingly-restored Bristol VRTSL6G, whilst the independent scene was represented by still-in-service 1950 Duple-bodied Albion Victor, LOD 495 of Carmel Coaches, which has for the past few years regularly appeared on the Summer Sunday service between Okehampton and Moretonhampstead.

Above:
Ex-Exeter PD2A/Massey 86 (86 GFJ) stands in the grounds of Oldway Mansion.

Sadly, as is usual with these reports, space does not permit us to list all the vehicles present, but amongst the wide range of vehicles on display at Oldway it would be fair to say that there was plenty to remind us all of the diversity of the bus preservation movement today . We would like to thank Philip Platt of the Devon General Society for his hospitality, and in particular for his help in arranging photographs.

Above:
Plymouth — two generations. Weymann-bodied Leyland PD1A 114 (DDR 414), makes an interesting comparison with East Lancs bodied AN68-type Leyland Atlantean 156 (ATK 156W).

Right:
Two 'Sea Dog'-class ex-Devon General Atlanteans pose together to represent two eras in Devon General's history, To the left DL931 carries NBC livery, whilst DL932 (right), is preserved in its original scheme.

Automotion Mark 3

This year's Classic Automotion was sponsored by *Buses*. PHILIP LAMB recalls the day's events, and took the photographs.

Restored to original condition, RM8 is now in the hands of the RM8 Club, Sidcup.

Inset:
Recently-restored RT2177, which featured in *Buses Focus* 8 last year, makes a splendid sight in its 'flake' grey-banded livery as it motors around the small roads system.

1949 Duple-bodie
Bedford OB LRL 660, the property
of a Mr R. A Ealson of Chertsey, is
regular visitor at *Buses* Classic Automotion

Held at the Transport Road Research Laboratory's test ground at Crowthorne, Berkshire, and now in its third year, *Buses* Classic Automotion, again pointed the way forward, demonstrating that bus rallies need not conform to the time-honoured formula whereby vehicles are all neatly lined up on arrival, not to move again until it's time to go home.

Running days in various forms, however, are becoming increasingly popular, often combining with a static display. Automotion pushes this concept to the limit. What is lost in terms of realism when operating over real bus routes is easily compensated for by the ease with which the avid rider can sample an assortment of vehicles in quick succession. Being off public roads also introduces flexibility — all one needs is a little imagination! Photographers benefit from the lack of traffic (and modern cars), enabling realistic scenes to be created using attractive wooded backdrops. This opportunity was further enhanced this year, as better use was made of the small roads system, inside the main test circuit.

As the preservation movement grows, and the public hunger for nostalgia grows with it, the need to find ingenious and inventive ways of taking carefully restored and well-presented buses and other road vehicles into the public arena becomes more and more pressing. Events such as *Buses* Classic Automotion are leading the way.

Left:
Many RTLs received roofbox-type bodies from early RTs, thus facilitating a 'double' non-standard withdrawal when the time came. Here we see RTL1427, which carries Park Royal body L416, being persued by the more familiar shape of RT1702.

Below left:
Ex-East Kent Dennis Falcon, bodied by Dennis, EFN 568 is now owned by Messers Hamshere & Burton of Guildford, the birthplace of this attractive little service bus.

ANOTHER RENOWN APPEARS

The second highbridge AEC Renown from an East Midlands municipality to make its preservation debut this year did so at the *Leicester Mercury* rally on 17 May. Following Nottingham MCW-bodied 370, described in *Buses* May, which first appeared at Cobham Bus Museum's open day in April, Leicester 190 (DBC 190C), which has East Lancs bodywork, was completed in time for the event in its home city. Both municipalities unusually combined the low-floor capability of the Renown with full-height bodywork to create exceptional headroom in both saloons.

The Leicester bus is owned by a consortium based partly in Leicester and partly in Gloucester and has been in preservation since September 1992. The 75-seat bus was one of three in the Leicester fleet, and it passed via Yeates to Taylor of Sutton Scotney, Hampshire, in about 1978. From Taylors it passed to a driving school in Salisbury before going to Carl Ireland of Hull.

The Renown was structurally in good order and has been repanelled. The front end and interior still need some attention, but this unusual bus looked well enough at its debut.
Picture by D. NICHOLLS.

VINTAGE BUSES IN WEST SOMERSET . . .

The West Somerset Railway will be holding its third Classic Bus running weekend at Bishops Lydeard over the weekend of **1/2 August**. The 'Rexquote Collection', which is a licensed psv operation comprising 16 preserved buses and coaches, will be running free services on both days and a mystery pub tour on the Saturday evening. Further details from Steve Morris (*the other one!* — Ed) or Sîan Gale, Rexquote Ltd, Station Road Works, Bishops Lydeard TA4 3BU, tel 01823 433398.

. . . AND OTHER EVENTS ON 1/2 AUGUST

Two other events for the same weekend are the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre Transport Experience at Mere Way, Ruddington, near Nottingham (details on 0115 940 5705), while the Routemaster Operators & Owners Association is planning a display of Routemasters at the Steam & Country Show at Lingfield, Surrey, over the same weekend. The event usually attracts a large display of buses.

LEYLAND SOCIETY FORMED

While a number of commercial vehicle manufacturers have their own society, not least the AEC Society, Britain's one-time biggest manufacturer has not been so marked until recently. Following an inaugural meeting at the British Commercial Vehicle Museum at Leyland on 14 June The Leyland Society has now been formed.

Several hundred bus and lorry enthusiasts, together with former Leyland employees, have indicated an interest in the society, and the first general meeting is planned to be held at the British Commercial Vehicle Museum on 3 October. However membership is available immediately at £10 per year; membership forms are available by sending a stamped, addressed envelope to Bruce Macphee, Hon Membership Secretary, The Leyland Society, 8 South Road, Newhaven, East Sussex BN9 9QJ.

It is perhaps fitting that such a society should be formed a couple of weeks before announcement that Volvo, the successor to Leyland Bus, is to end bus production in Britain.

BEDFORDS AT SOMERSHAM

A Bedford Gathering and Open Day has been arranged at the premises of Dews Coaches of Somersham, Cambridgeshire, on Sunday **13 September**. The organisers are particularly keen to see OBs, SBs, J2s and VALs represented at the event, along with commercial vehicles, and owners are asked to contact them on 01223 843802 or 574654.

Dews itself, which is 45 years old this year, owns three Bedfords of varying vintages, an OB, a J2 and a VAL, and is featured in *Preserved Bus* 2 (July-August), which is currently on sale price £2.50.

LATHALMOND WEEKEND STILL ON

Despite the general closure of the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum at Lathalmond to the public, the open weekend scheduled for **29/30 August** is to go ahead as planned.

The SVBM took the decision to close to the general public following dissatisfaction from the local authority regarding its provision of toilets and access for disabled visitors; work is now proceeding to rectify these shortcomings but is unlikely to be finished before the end of this season. However the Museum is confident it will be able to reopen fully for next season.

The museum can still accommodate organised visits from groups, who should contact Eddie Taylor on 01383 720241.

Left:
The now defunct Liverpool University Public Transport Society, which folded in 1991, would have been 40 years old this year, and to mark the event Merseypride former BEA Routemaster 31 (NMY 655E) was used on a tour to Crich Tramway Museum, where it is seen with Liverpool 'Green Goddess' 869.

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Forthcoming Events

6th September 1998 - Trans-Lancs Rally - Sponsored by HYCOTE
In excess of 200 vintage vehicles of all types will gather at the Museum and then depart at 11.00 am on a road run to Manchester's Heaton Park, arriving an hour later. Entry to the Park is free and there's lots to do and see. A vintage bus service will operate in the park during the afternoon.

5th & 6th December 1998 - A Christmas Cracker
All aboard for a cracker of a day out at our pre-Christmas festival. Get transport type presents, meet your friends and see the entertainment laid on. A free vintage bus service will go to the New Century Hall in Manchester where The Manchester Model Railway Society are holding an exhibition on both days.

Why not visit our shop where we have an extensive range of die cast models, also a range of books, videos.

YOU WRITE

No conspiracy

Sir,
As ever, I read your letters page with interest. Mr Bond's letter I see has already been answered by one of our passengers from Wokingham.

Mr Gott ('You write,' *Buses* April 1998), seems to have developed a conspiracy theory about CentreWest running the smallest buses it can. So far as route 607 is concerned, we tried to improve the standards of comfort of the standard Metrobus for those travelling on longer journeys, and the coach-seated Nationals and Lynxes were the best that we could find, given the inevitable shortage of investment money within London Transport at the time. Higher quality double-deckers have now been introduced as a reflection of our persistence in wanting to make this change, and London Transport Buses was able to agree it, unusually outside the normal contract renewal process. I would like to think that both CentreWest and LTB deserve some credit for supporting our unusual express route and finding the means to improve its vehicles.

Mr Gott's presumption in respect of replacing smaller buses on routes 28, 31 and 70 with larger vehicles at lower frequencies is just wrong. All of the history in the last 30 years demonstrates that larger buses at lower frequencies drive away passengers, and in most businesses it is something to celebrate if demand increases to such an extent that capacity has to be increased to manage it. This is precisely what has happened on route 31 and again we have managed with London Transport Buses to put on larger vehicles but ones which still cope with routes with appalling congestion and narrow roads.

We are — like everyone else in London — short of drivers, but Mr Gott adds two unconnected circumstances since Westbourne Park has not in recent times suffered from any appreciable staff shortage. His emotive conclusion is not borne out by the facts.

The serious managerial challenge in the bus industry is to generate additional custom, even if it is by relatively unconventional means. I am afraid a liberal dose of nostalgia is no use as a management tool to move forward in an industry th we are all keen on improving.

Peter Hendy,
Divisional Director London & South East,
First UK Bus Division

Leeds a disgrace

Sir,
I was interested to read Dr G. Brooke's letter in the July issue of *Buses*, largely because although I have been working in Yorkshire for over seven years, it is only recently that I have begun to work in Leeds (and Sheffield) on one or two days per week. He has touched on what I believe is a very important aspect of the industry as a whole, that is the image portrayed to the public, and in particular the public the industry wishes to woo from their cars.

While I personally think the new First Bus image is both fresh and attractive — by far the best of the big groups' attempts to modernise — Leeds is a city which, frankly, is a disgrace as far as overall transport strategy is concerned. With very few suburban railways, although commuting by rail into the city is reasonable, in general it is the car which reigns supreme, and the traffic policy adopted which appears to make life as difficult and as complicated as possible for the average motorist is much criticised by locals. As a professional in the city, often mixing with solicitors, accountants and bankers, the daily gridlock and trek to work is a regular topic of conversation. What an opportunity for the bus industry to really get its gloves off, and show what can be done.

Yet, what do we have? As Dr Brooke says, four liveries on a very mixed fleet. narrow Dennis Darts, looking modern, but dreadfully uncomfortable. Numerous Atlanteans with registrations as old as 'S'. But there are also liveries for other operators — Arriva (what a sickly blue, and a horrible application of it), and all its predecessors; Keighley & District; Harrogate & District; Yorkshire Coastline; Black Prince, where every bus is deliberately in a different livery; Leeds Suburban; Bradford Traveller (old livery); Optional Bus, and the other sundry independents. In other words to the intending passenger, a complete shambles.

Add to that, a very good modern bus station in the wrong place, and an almost total dearth of information in the city centre and it is little wonder that the buses are left for those that must, rather than for those that could. On the few occasions I do commute by car (I usually travel by train) how I wish there was a park-&-ride from the M1/M62 junction 29, where there is more than adequate space to build a five star operation.

In contrast, when I go to Sheffield, I park at the Meadowhall Park-&-Ride (which is hardly advertised at all, and is certainly not big enough, being full by 08.20hrs, so don't even think of parking there if you want to do some shopping in the centre) and catch a tram, cheap, clean and fast, and used by men in suits. The buses are mainly in the same colour and an air of organisation is apparent.

In short, there is a long way to go before the bus can even think about being a realistic alternative in Leeds, yet it has the city market to itself. Complacency and bad management?

Harry L. Barker
Beverley

Corporate liveries 1

Sir,
How I agree with Phil Gilbert's and Dr Brooke's comments, ('You write', *Buses* May and June), regarding the Arriva fleetname and livery. I was appalled to learn towards the end of last year of Cowie's intentions, and wrote to the company expressing my views, and stating how sad it would be to lose some of the very attractive liveries, and long standing, respected fleetnames, such as Crosville, which is almost 100 years old. After years of upheaval, since deregulation, I had become surrounded by Midland Red North, Stevensons, Crosville Cymru and North Western.

This vast area has now been swallowed up by the bland Arriva name, meaningless to the vast majority of the travelling public. How boring it will be when every vehicle is in the same livery. Will all this change lead to an increase in the number of passengers travelling? I doubt it very much.

In reply to my letter to Cowies, I received a short reply stating that 'No final decision has been made, and all comments received will be considered'. About the same time, Sir Tom Cowie, founder of the company, also expressed in no uncertain terms, his views on the matter in the national press.

Having read the booklet produced by Cowie Group for its staff, explaining the change of identity, I am convinced that it is being run by psychologists, not businessmen, as Dr Brooke so rightly states, to impress the shareholders only.

C.S. Lodington
Sandiway, Cheshire

Corporate liveries 2

Sir,
Your correspondent ('Corporate Conspiracy', Buses June 1998) asks why are corporate liveries deemed appropriate.

In a nutshell, the answer is investors. Enthusiasts don't matter, and passengers only matter so long as they assemble in viable groups along the routes that the company wants to operate, but investors mean high share prices which means good credit which means more new buses. Investors need to see abundant evidence of their investment working for them — unlike the enthusiast, they don't care whether it's a 1972 VR, nor do they care, as a customer would, whether it's an 85 or an 85B: they want to see seas of turquoise, or white or whatever, to convince them that their money is being put to good use. If the long term result of this is more modern, customer friendly machinery, then it's OK by me!

R. A. Flower,
Bury St Edmunds

Editorial tosh

Sir,
Your editorial last month was a load of old tosh! On the bus service described, between Shepperton and Hersham, three journeys to work on the trot recently had to be aborted due in one case to no driver, and in two others by buses leaving early, the second instance compounded by a driver on the next bus from Walton-on-Thames (where I had walked to avoid the 40min gap in the service) sailing gaily past the stop in the outside lane, ignoring the passengers waving at him.

The brisk four-mile walk to the office was no doubt good for my health, and also saved a large amount of money — but what a way to run a bus service! No, London & Country seems to have slipped back into its old ways— oddly coinciding with it finally becoming Arriva-somewhere-or-other!

Its managing director has warned of further cuts in service because insufficient passengers are travelling; I wonder why?

Stephen Morris,
Editor *Buses*

(If talking to yourself is the first sign of madness, what is writing to yourself . . .? — Ed)

Still Citylink

Sir,
Firstly, I would like to compliment you on the excellent choice of photographic material in Buses July. However, may I draw your attention to the caption on page 8.

There is a distinct impression given that Arriva has started its own service between Glasgow and Glasgow Airport. In fact, Arriva is contracted by Scottish Citylink to operate service 905.

Freda Rapson,
Scottish Citylink Coaches Ltd

To BUSES, Riverdene Business Park, Molesey Road, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG

A1A Travel, Birkenhead

Deliveries are of new Optare Excels R845/6 FWW, for services 107/207 (Liverpool-Penny Lane).
Four Optare Solos are due for delivery later this year.

Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs R526 YRP is on loan from Dawson Rentals and is used on service 901 (Leasowe Station-Moreton).

ABC Travel, Ainsdale

Four Optare Solos are also due here in June.
Optare MetroRider demonstrator R98 HUA has been here, at work on service 347 (Chorley-Southport).

East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean GFV 151W is in stock ex-Preston.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Another new double-decker delivered is East Lancs Pyoneer-bodied Dennis Arrow R55 ACL.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M K18 AMB is now in stock; Plaxton-bodied Bristol RELH6L BFM 293L has also been acquired for scrap.

Ex-Stagecoach Manchester MCW Metrobus ANA 155Y is now in livery.

Leyland Titan CUL 74V is the third of its type to be withdrawn and sold to Ards of Newtonards, twin CUL 72V is due for early withdrawal and cannibalisation. Similar OHV 760Y is now scrapped after cannibalisation. Leyland National 2 VBG 95V has been withdrawn and sold to Pilkington of Accrington, Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger C67 JTU is now with Merseypride, Garston.

Alpha, Leyland

New deliveries are Ikarus-bodied DAFs R116-21 GNW, of which R120/1 GNW are to be based in Middlesbrough, where the operations of Gladwins of Middlesbrough have been acquired.

Applebys, Conisholme

Ex-Nottingham Leyland Atlantean AN68C/1R/East Lancs H47/33D SNU 458/60X are now in use here, with centre doors sealed from inside, no-exit signs carried and centre door gear disabled. They remain in Nottingham livery and are employed on schools services 961/962 in the Beverley area, for which their narrow doorways may be very useful in controlling the milling crowds!

Arriva Cymru AA

Devaway of Broughton was acquired as of 15 March.

Arriva Derby AA

(City Rider)

New arrivals are Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/29F 4626/8/30/1 (R626 MNU etc), delivered in national Arriva turquoise and route-branded like their sisters for services 44/45 (Derby-Alvaston). Scania N113DRB 164 (N164 VVO) is an early repaint into turquoise too.

Former Kentish Bus/Midland Fox double-deckers have remained in store here.

Arriva East Herts & Essex AA

(County Bus)

MCW Metrobus/MCW H43/28D M266, 491 and 544 (BYX 266V, GYE 491, 544W) are acquisitions to record from Arriva London North.

Arriva Fox County AA

(Midland Fox)

Stevensons' pair of Optare Spectras, L94/5 HRF are now at work here as 4001/2 in Arriva turquoise, based at Market Harborough for service X61 (Leicester-Northampton).

MCW Metroliner C50 VJU has recently been with Tony Scott Racing, re-registered as AJR 11, but is now with European Aviation, re-registered back again to C50 VJU.

Arriva Kent & Sussex AA

(Maidstone & District)

Long-awaited Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F now delivered are 1101-5/7-10/2-24 (R101 TKO etc), all received at Gillingham, some after nearly six months in store pending modifications and requiring remedial cleaning work before use as a result to remedy rather streaky appearance.

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 3137 (L137 YVK) is still on loan rather than acquired while 1204 has been on longterm loan to New Enterprise.

Now withdrawn for disposal are Mercedes-Benz 609Ds 1041/4/6/53/4/7/63/4/66/9/72/6/84 (E41/4/6, 53/4/7, 63/4 UKL; F66 BKK; G69, 72/6 PKR; G84 SKR). 609Ds 1047/52/65 (E47, 52 UKL, E65 XKE) have been sold to Arriva North West, 1052 making the journey on tow; Dennis Darts 3161/2 (G218 LGK, G122 RGT) to Arriva Crawley & East Surrey along with Bristol VRT/SL3 5880 (FKM 880V).

The sale of the preserved fleet has started; the famous *Knightrider* Commer Avenger I NKN 650 is now in the care of a well-known preservationist in Worthing and Leyland Leopard EKL 456K is with a new owner in Whittlesey. There is no news thus far on the magnificent Leyland Atlantean 558 LKP — such a shame it is that these excellent ambassadors for the company are being summarily despatched in this way — albeit happily into continued (private) preservation.

New Enterprise now has the services of Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess Beaver DP25F 1301 (H301 FKL), to be given route-branding for the Chartwell Explorer before use. It was initially taken to Tunbridge Wells for a white livery base to be applied ready for this. It has replaced Mercedes-Benz 609D 1068.

Arriva Kent Thameside Dennis Dart 3132 (L132 YVK) has been on loan.

Arriva Lancashire AA

(South Lancs Travel)

Further fleetnumbers confirmed/amended are 170-3 (J10 SLT, *J470 XHL*; K1, 2 SLT; K3 SLT, *K455 EDT, 30938, K455 EDT*), 198 (G113 PGT); 848 (D154 THG), 849 (49 XBF, *F603 CET, A19 RBL. F603 CET*); 1276-9 (J6 SLT, *N192 BNB*; J7-9 SLT), 1281/2/5 (L1, 2 SLT; M5 SLT, *M20 CLA*).

Dennis Falcon Hs 389/90 (A50 LHG, B51 LFV) have passed to Arriva Manchester and now carry City Plus-style livery.

Arriva London & Country AA

It is pleasing to record delivery of further new double-deckers in the shape of further DAF DB250/Northern Counties H43/24D DFD5-8, 10 and 12 (R205 CKO etc).

From Arriva Kent & Sussex have come Dennis Dart 9SDL3002/Duple Dartline B36F DS173/4 (G122 RGT, G218 LGK) and from Arriva Kent Thameside come sister vehicles DS176-8/80 (G123 RGT etc), new to R&I Tours.

Leyland Atlanteans AN175, 228/58/9/67/81/5/8 (XPG 175T, EPH 228V, KPJ 258/9/67/81/5/8W), Leyland Nationals GF180 (THX 180S), LNB553 (MEL 553P), SNB377/80/2/5/93/4, 427/35/40/75/91, 543 (YPL 377/80/2/5/93/4, 427/35/40T, BPL 475/91T, EPD 543V), Volvo B10M-61 VCB89 (C89 NNV), AEC Reliance 161 (APM 113T), Leyland Nationals 221/35/46 (KPA 372/86/67P), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 403/4 (K403/4 VPK) and MCW Metroriders 861/5 (F861/5 LCU) no longer appear on the company's stocklist and are presumed withdrawn and sold.

Arriva London North AA

(Leaside Buses)

Happily, Arriva has decided to allow the classic AEC Routemaster class to have a livery more in keeping with tradition. RML2635 (NML 635E) is the first in the new livery, which comprises red with off-white centre band (conventionally placed and not upswept in cow-horn style) with the familiar narrow yellow trimstripe placed high on the skirt and black wings. White Arriva logos are also carried and it is pleasing to record that the scheme looks very well.

MCW Metrobuses M266, 491 and 544 (BYX 266V, GYE 491, 544W) have passed to Arriva East Herts & Essex.

Arriva London South AA

(South London)

The last three VE-class Volvo Citybuses to be taken out of service were VE661/76/83 (H661 GPF etc), despatched to storage at Stevenage. Sixteen of this class are expected to join Arriva The Shires stock.

All former Kentish Bus RML-class AEC Routemasters are now repainted out of their attractive (but more recently, jaded) maroon and cream. Many have yellow cantrail bands, some white, whilst others are in allover red (eg RML2512/36). Having improved in appearance by the fitment of new radiator grilles (all with badges and silver trim) at refurbishment, many have now lost this benefit effectively by the complete grille units being liberally overpainted with red paint.

Body type

A	Articulated
B	Single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats/bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker (ie with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other types, with conventional gangways are H [Highbridge] regardless of overall height)
O	Open-top
CO	Convertible open-top

Seating capacity

(For double-deckers this is shown with the upper-deck capacity first, eg 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where these are not known a total figure is given).

Door position

F	Front
R	Rear
C	Centre
D	Dual doors

When platform doors are fitted where these would not normally figure, usually on rear entrance buses, this is indicated by D after the door position. The letter 't' after the door indicates the provision of a toilet whilst L after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

Re-registrations

Where a vehicle is re-registered its previous registration numbers follow in italic type, with the most recent given first where it has been registered more than once.

Vehicle reports should be sent to
J. G. Lidstone, 76 Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2XD.

Please mark your envelope 'Fleet News'.

Arriva Manchester AA
(Beeline)

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of former Hyndburn Dennis Falcon Hs 389/90 (A50 LHG, B51 LFV) from Arriva Lancashire and Renault Dodge S56/Northern Counties crew shuttles D417/26 NNA from Arriva Cheshire West, known here as Van 17 and Van 26 respectively! Mercedes-Benz 811D 88 (G118 TND), Leyland National 418 (MIL 7618) and Dennis Dart 1265 (K877 UDB) are now transferred to Arriva North West.

Darts 1153/5/6 (L153 UKB etc) are now in Arriva turquoise and carry route branding for Easylink services 664/674; 1153-6 (L153 UKB etc) are named *Beryl, Basil, Bertie* and *Barry* respectively, carried on metal plates affixed to their front dash.

Renault S56s 11, 21, 37, 42 and 46 (D411 NNA etc) have been sold, thought for scrap.

Arriva Merseyside AA
(Liverline)

Vehicles sold (thought for scrap only) are Leyland Atlanteans 502/8/9/12/9/38 (FBV 487/93/4/7, 504W, TPU 72R) and 720/4/8/30 (UPK 141/38S, VPA 150S).

Arriva Midland AA
(Midland Red North)

New deliveries are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F 1329-32/4-44 (R329 TJW etc) and Scania L113/Plaxton 1415-29 (R415-29 TJW), based at Stafford (1329-32/4-47), Shrewsbury (1338-44), Burton (1415-9) and Tamworth (1420-9).

Early appearances in Arriva livery are Mercedes-Benz 171 (G171 YRE), 255 (L255 NFA), 376-8/81 (M376 EFD etc) and Leyland Tigers 1713/40 (TPC 103X, AAX 590A).

The remains of Stevensons' prototype Leyland B45 Olympian 1999 (Q246 FVT) were recently taken to Cannock for final cannibalisation for parts.

Leyland Olympians 2005/11 (G505/11 SFT) are now transferred to Burton from Midland Red North territory, 2010 (G510 SFT) being at Spath and in national Arriva turquoise for service 401 (Uttoxeter-Burton). Other Olympians may well be drafted in to oust Metrobuses.

The Viking Tours & Travel coach fleet is reported passed to Travelstyle, DAF/Plaxton 2 (82 HBC), Volvo B10M/Plaxton 5, 6, 10/1/4-7/9, 28 (XAF 759, 852 YYC, 803 HOM, OGL 513, LUY 742, VOI 6874, FSU 661, VLT 166, 468 KPX, PCW 946), Bova 9 (WYR 562), B10M/Jonckheere 20 (784 RBF), Dennis Javelin/Duple 30-33 (430/20 UFM, HIL 3596, GIL 8487) and MCW Metrorider 34 (PSV 323) being involved.

Arriva North West AA
(North Western)

Acquisitions are Leyland National 10351B/1R/B41F YPL 443T from Arriva Cymru and 11351A/R/B52F XYS 596S, 10351B/1R/B44F AAK 112T and 10351A/1R/B41F GGE 171T from McGills, Barrhead, none allocated fleetnumbers.

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of 88 (G118 TND), 418 (MIL 7618), 1265 (K877 UDB) and 1296/7 (M936/27 EYS) all from Arriva Manchester.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 61/4/5 (M61 SMA etc) are now in Arriva turquoise with route-branding for service 104 (Warrington-Woolston) whilst 120 (M120 YCM) now carries Star Line livery and Dee Line fleetnames. Dennis Darts 1150-2 (L150-2 SBG) now carry route branding for City Plus 143/144 (Bootle-Walton Park/Litherland), but Dart 1186 (M186 YKA) has lost its name *Jenny*.

The last Bristol VRT/SL3s have been withdrawn and were 545/64/8-70 ((PCA 423V, VCA 453/63W, WTU 479/80W) — thus ending the Bristol marque from North Western.

Mercedes-Benz 609D 68 (H407 BVR) is now with Arriva Cymru and Dennis Dominators 629/36/7/66 (G629 EKA, F636/7 BKD, G667 FKA) are now with First Leicester.

Redundant vehicles sold (all thought for scrap only) are Renault-Dodge S46s 1, 2 (E224/5 BVR), S56s 3-5, 8, 10, 16, 33 (D403 NNA etc), Leyland National 213/31/4/7-9/42/4/9/89/90 (MLJ 919P, UHG 735/51/60R, ACW 761/2/5R, CBV 767/87S, PKP 551R, VKE 561S), 313/5/21/2/38/9/46/55/66/77 (LPB 196P, BPL 486T, NPK 233R, LPB 207P, UPB 342/34S, YPL 408, 399T, GMB 385, 667T), Leyland Atlanteans 531/4/5 (RFR 414, SFV 432/6P), Bristol VRT/SL3s 553/66 (FTU 391T, VCA 455W), Leyland Leopard 818 (OMA 510V).

Leyland Nationals 461-6 (OAH 552M, KHT 121P, UHG 741R, RAU 597R, VKE 566S, URA 605S) have all passed to Volvo at Warwick, whilst XYS 596S, AAK 112T, GGE 171T and YPL 443T have been quickly dismantled for spares.

Arriva Southend AA

The second new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B25F is 454 (R954 VPU), another delivered via Arriva East Herts & Essex and repainted in Arriva livery before arrival. This and 453 (R953 VPU) were the first to carry front/rear Arriva fleetnames and logos; these are now being applied to recent Olympian repaints, which had previously run with Arriva material only carried on their sides.

Further arrivals are youthful Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader B37F 17, 18 (P417/8 HVX), from East Herts & Essex, these being two of the three SLFs new to County Bus for Lea Valley's Ware-based service 395 (Fanham Common-Sele Farm Estate). They are being outshopped in Arriva turquoise before use, whereupon they are expected to oust the shortlived Leyland National 2s, 12 and 25 (BVP 812V, EON 825V). No18 made an inaugural appearance at the recent Southend Bus Rally.

AEC Regent III 594 (KTF 594) was again making itself useful in a goodwill capacity, with a charity bus-pull/bus-wash at Shoeburyness Fair and as rally control for the Southend Bus Rally, following a star appearance at the reopening of Southend's famous Kursaal recently.

Daimler Fleetline GHJ 385L has passed via Filers of Ilfracombe to Carlisle Crime Prevention, Penrith and most recently this spring to Lime House Estates of Cumdivock.

Following certain difficulties with the new Short Street construction, faithful London Road garage continues at the time of writing (mid-June) and may well do so for some time yet.

Ashalls, Manchester

A guided Manchester City Tour is now operated, commencing with the use of conventional coaches. The most unusual conversion of Leyland Leopard/Duple C47F RMS 396W to part-open-top, depicted last month, is expected to be one of two. Double-deck open-toppers are banned from Manchester city centre, owing to the Metrolink overhead power supply.

Averon, Melling

Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW XNV 879S is now in stock from United Counties and is in use in full Stagecoach colours. Ikarus-bodied Volvo B10Ms J131 MRW and H407 LVC are acquisitions from Flights of Birmingham.

Setra DSU 405 has been withdrawn and sold to Silver Knight of Malmesbury, Leyland Tigers NBD 10, 14Y and RBD 396/7Y going to Heyfordian of Upper Heyford.

Avon, Moreton

New East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dart SLF R54 OCK is now numbered D54 and National Greenway/East Lancs WUH 163T is G163, the pair being route-branded for services 82/83 (Heswall-Birkenhead).

Blackburn Transport

New arrivals are Optare MetroRider MR17/B29F 641-4 (R641-4 OBV), whilst an acquisition from Excelsior, Bournemouth is Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C49Ft 330 (N224 THO, *A13 EXC*).

Former Black Prince Volvo-engined National Greenway/East Lancs 432 (213 ONU) is now in livery and in service.

Leyland Atlantean 136 (WRN 136V) is now engineless at the depot and withdrawn 118/9/23/5/6 (CBV 118/9/23S, LFR 125/6T) are now with Thomas, Porth ex-Warrington.

Blackpool Transport

It is reported that two batches of new minibuses are now due — a batch of Optare MetroRiders followed by some Optare Solos.

First of the attractive Northern Counties Paladin-rebodied Leyland Atlantean saloons to be released for sale is 136 (TKU 466K), now with Merseypride.

The ex-Salford/Blue Bus Leyland Atlantean open-topper later fitted with a ghastly wood and perspex shed-type structure covering the forward area of its upper deck, 451 (DBA 227C), has now ended up with Ripley, Carlton (dealer) after a while with Hall of Kennoway.

Black Prince, Morley

Now in stock is Scania L113CRL/East Lancs Flyte B49F P919 AWT (*P2 BFB*) ex-Bigfoot, Leeds.

Bluebird, Moston

New are Iveco 59.12/Marshall R15, 16 BLU.

Ex-Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Atlantean A699 HNB is now in fleet livery. Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart 22 (N22 BLU) has been dispensed with, North Devon being its recipient. Ex-MTL MCW Metrobuses EKA 156Y and DEM 760Y have passed to Classic of Annfield Plain.

New Dennis Darts 6-8 (R6-8 BLU) belong to Blue Bus & Coach Services of Horwich and not to this operator; similarly, Leyland Leopards 16 and 18 (ULS 316/8T) have been withdrawn by Blue Bus and not Bluebird — apologies offered for gremlins having got into the works here. Thanks to corespondent Andrew Harding for putting right my errors.

Blue Bus, Horwich

New is DAF SB3000/Plaxton C53F 300 (R300 BLU).

Three, or possibly four, new double-deckers are reported on order, suspected to be Volvo Olympians with East Lancs bodywork.

Leyland Leopard PSU3G/4R/Alexander B53F 20 (CSF 160W), similar PSU3F/4R/Alexander B53F 21 (WFS 141W) and Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2R/Alexander DP49F MNS 46Y are now in stock from Fife Scottish, 20 and 21 being freshly outshopped in latest livery. Interestingly, it is expected that the Tiger may receive a new East Lancs bus body before entering service here. From The Shires come Volvo B10M-61/East Lancs B55F HIL 7467 and MBZ 6454 and re-acquisitions from Colburn of Barry are ageing Alexander-bodied Leopards ULS 334T and EGB 60T in unrelieved allover red.

Duple Dominant-bodied Tiger B957 LHN from Tees & District and Dominant-bodied Leopard PHN 572R from South Lancs have been acquired for cannibalisation.

As noted above in part, Leopards 16, 18 and 25 (ULS 316/8T, GMS 294S) have been withdrawn.

Border Buses, Burnley

Acquisitions are brisk, with the arrival of Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean KPJ 276W and MCW Metrorider F865 LCU from Kentish Bus; Atlantean MNC 529W from Halls, Kennoway; Leyland National 2 DOC 44V from K-Line, Huddersfield; Leyland Tiger/Alexander (Belfast) B55F G59, 61 RND and Dennis Javelin/Neoplan C53F M903/6/7 OVR from Timeline; Tiger/Plaxton LIB 1183/4 from Rossendale and Volvo B10M/Plaxton E804 DPN from Eastbourne Buses.

Acquired Tigers numbered in the Border fleet are 1, 9 and 83, 84 (G61, 50 RND, LIB 1183/4).

Duple-bodied Tigers GSU 554 and XSU 905 are now transferred from Viscount Central to Border.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — FirstGroup
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Opposite:
Gloucester Park & Ride services are now being operated by Optare Excels of Bennetts. R400 BEN was seen on 9 May last.
PAUL CHANCELLOR

Left:
G. K. Kinch is now part of the Wellglade Group. In from Trent comes Leyland National 530 (FRA 530V).
R. GELL

ECW-bodied Leyland Leopards 173/4 (PJI 9173/4) are now reseated with bus seats as B53F. Leyland Nationals 2 and 5 (EUM 892T, SKN 905R), Leyland Leopards 307/8 (OIB 6207, 3608), Neoplan OIJ 201 and Toyota Coaster XFK 305 have been withdrawn and sold.

Atlantean PTD 415S has been withdrawn, Leopard 381 (LIB 1181) and Leyland Tiger 82 (GBG 582Y) withdrawn and sold. Leopards OIB 3608 and OIB 6207, Neoplan OIJ 207 and Toyota XFK 305 are due for early withdrawal, upon receipt of ex-Timeline Neoplan-bodied Dennis Javelins.

Bostock, Congleton

New Scania K113CRB/Van Hool Alizée C49Ft R7 BOS is now in stock and was ordered by Holmeswood Coaches, which took over operations late last year.

Ex-Shearings Plaxton-bodied Scania J288 NNC is now in stock, but is not yet in fleet livery.

Van Hool-bodied Scanias J292/3 TPF and J671 LGA carry a new white-based livery with Bostocks of Cheshire fleetnames.

Capital Citybus

The order for East Lancs Pyoneer-bodied Dennis Arrows is now increased to 28. New Arrow 426 is confirmed as to H49/27D layout (although officially appears as H49/28D). Deliveries are of Arrow/Pyoneer H49/27D 427/9-36/8 (R427 ULE etc), the first of the type in red/yellow livery and for service 76.

A further MCW Metrobus taken into stock is DR101/12/MCW H43/28D 309 (BYX 249V). Additionally, London General M246/60/74 (BYX 246V etc) have been briefly on hire.

Ford Transit crew-ferry vehicles 827-30/3 (C427 AHT, C198 KBH, C528/19 TJF, C903 LEW) have been deleted from stock.

Buses are being provided for MTL London's service 214 on Sundays, whilst drivers (only) are being provided to help Thamesway for its service W9 recently.

Capital Logistics, West Drayton

Ex-London Coaches, Kent DAF SB220/Ikarus Citibus DP42F J801/3-10 KHD and L511 KJX only were taken into stock for LT service 726. J802 KHD is now acquired from Arriva Bus & Coach, Gomersal (formerly Hughes-DAF), another saloon reported being M806 RCP.

Meanwhile, deliveries are of new DAF SB220/Plaxton Prestige R32, 91 GNW are also at work, 32 in mauve and 91 in white with yellow route branding for the 726; Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 R942 AMB in white with green/gold trim, thought from Cheshire Bus & Coach (dealer) and finally air-conditioned Optare Excel/B33F R985-92 EWU for LT service U3 (Uxbridge-Heathrow).

Chester City Transport

Leyland Olympian 1 (B201 EFM) and Leyland Lion 18 (E941 CDS) are now in fleet livery ex-Park & Ride red, white and blue.

Another Leyland Fleetline to be withdrawn is 90 (KFM 190T). Fleetline 82 (VCA 182R) is now in preservation ex-Hughes of Llandudno.

Citybus, Toxteth

New Optare MetroRider R102 HUA is at work on Merseytravel service 191.

Classic Coaches, High Wycombe

Further slightly less than classic additions to stock are Leyland Nationals KCG 627L, UMO 180N and UPB 307S, which join similar PUK 641R, SOA 663S, UPB 340S and XPC 14S here. Also added to stock are ex-London United MCW Metroriders D461/2 PON.

Slightly more interesting additions are Bristol LHS/ECW GPD 304N and JUG 356/7N, former Colchester Bristol RELL SWC 24K being noted on rail replacement recently with SWC 25K and OWC 723M being expected into stock apparently. Also acquired are ex-Crosskeys Volvo Ailsa/Alexander NSP 323/4R.

A new division is 'Topless Travel', using rare Bristol RE open-topper PHN 178L, former West Midlands open-top Daimler Fleetline YOX 69K and former Southdown/Crosville Cymru/Northern Bus Fleetline open-toppers TCD 375/6J.

CMT Buses, Aintree

Volvo B6LE/Wright demonstrator R460 VOP has been in use, numbered 2013.

Cygnet, Darton

This operator is another welcomed for sending source data to Fleet News this month for the first time.

Currently in stock are Leyland Leopard PSU3C/4R/Plaxton DP53F 7 (ERB 534T), PSU3E/4R Duple B55F 15 (LPY 457W), PSU3E/4R/Plaxton C49F 16 (ARB 132T), PSU3F/4R/Plaxton C51F 17 (PTV 585X), PSU3G/4R/Plaxton C53F 20 (VRC 612Y), PSU3C/2R/Alexander B53F 21 (MFR 306P), PSU3D/2R/Alexander B53F 22 (WCW 308R), PSU3E/4R/Alexander B53F 27-29 (BSJ 914/8T, GCS 68V); Bristol LHS6L/ECW DP27F 14 (GTX 761W); MCW Metrorider MF150/82/B23F 25, 26 (E983 DNK, E130 SNY) and Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B52F 30 (RSG 816V). Also in stock is ex-PSV Freight Rover Sherpa 365/Rootes B6F maintenance van L3 (D460 CKV).

Bristol LHS 14 is for sale and Leopard 16 is currently out of use.

Ambermile Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Duple C49F FYX 819W has been on loan, as have Alexander-bodied Leopards EGD 51, 60T, YCS 93T and ULS 334T from Blue Bus of Horwich.

Delaine, Bourne

Ex-Greater Manchester Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean 101 (GDB 179N) has been withdrawn and is now being stripped of all reuseable components for sister Atlanteans, before it is scrapped on-site. The other eight continue and are 102/19/20/3-6 (GDB 180/1N, ANA 224T, FVR 256V, ORJ 384/65/80/62W).

Dennis's, Dukinfield

Dennis Dart SLF P742 HND has been withdrawn and sold to Lionspeed of West Bromwich along with Mercedes-Benz N257 DUR, Mercedes K289 ESF passing to Shaw of Coatbridge.

Dickinson, Wrangle

New is Mercedes-Benz 814D/Autobus Classique C29F R100 DJD.

The Eagre, Morton

Now in stock are Leyland Atlantean/Alexander SCN 244S, East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean WCK 215Y, East Lancs-bodied Atlantean DBV 155W and Dennis Falcon/Wadham Stringer B46D YDC 24Y.

Good news is that the unique low-height Volvo Ailsa/Alexander, TRR 814R (*RTO 1R*) has now passed to the 4738 Group, Birmingham, for preservation via Doig of Glasgow.

Bristol VRT/SL3 LRA 799P has been dispensed with to Whiting, Pontefract (dealer) for scrap.

Eastonways, Ramsgate

More new minis here are Iveco 59.12/Marshall B27F R418/9 XFL.

East Yorkshire EY

New vehicles due are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B25F as 449-68 of which eight are for Scarborough & District and two for East Yorkshire at Beverley, these ousting long-lived Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 406-19 (C406-19 VVN). The Optare Excel L1070s due are to be S-registered, 287-96 due for Hull and 237-41 for Scarborough for services 7, 17, 117, complementing the current Dennis Dart SLFs, leaving two available for summer Park & Ride service 111.

DAF SB220/Plaxton Prestige demonstrator P10 LPG has been on loan and used on service 181 (Hull-Hessle), operating alongside Optare Excels. Apparently it has been turning heads locally, too!

It is reported that Bristol VRT/SL3 replacement is to be urgently brought forward by the purchase of no less than 20 acquired Leyland Olympians, ten of these being from Eastbourne Buses' Northern Counties-bodied batch E847-58 DPN, to be numbered 612-21 and the balance of 10 being from Stagecoach Busways Alexander-bodied C-LFT batch. This should allow the disposal of the last Leyland 501-engined VRs, 502-7/9/10 (JKH 502V etc) and older Gardner 6LXB-engined examples.

Coaches acquired to enable seatbelts to be fitted are Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 17, 18 and 84 (A906 LWU, A824 JEC, B263 KPF) from Torr, Nottingham, similar 19, 82/3 (TJI 8781/2/3) from Southern Vectis, 85 (A7 GGT) from Stagecoach Midland Red and 86 (C101 PCN) from Go-Ahead Northern. All are freshly outshopped in allover cream with two burgundy stripes at skirt level, similar to the 1980s Coach Travel livery. The logo carried comprises a burgundy kite, symbolising freedom, the 'Coaches' logo being in house-style lettering with shaded EY logo behind it and prominent East Yorkshire fleetnames are also carried — this feature to be applied fleet-wide, spelling the end for current operating names Kingstonian, Primrose Valley Coaches and Connor & Graham.

For East Yorkshire Coaches come Volvo B10M/Van Hool Alizée C49Ft 88, 89 (HIL 5697/8). Additionally, National Expressliners H203 CRH and J726 CFT have been on loan.

Former Finglands B10Ms 215-8 (M415-8 RRN) are now based at Pocklington for new service X46 to York, for which they are route-branded, sisters 219-21 (M419-21 RRN) now being with Scarborough & District at Pickering. The limited-stop X46 replaces the 44-mile previously double-decker operated service 746, with very tight timings apparently. Optare Prisma semi-coach 283 (R283 EKH) is now freshly outshopped in Stagecoach corporate stripes for use on the jointly-worked service X62 (Hull-Leeds), on which EY vehicles have been noted heavily predominating.

A large number of vehicle re-registrations comprise:

Leyland Tiger 6 (165 DKH, *A106 MKH)* to 46 EYB; 21 (421 CKH, *A521 EVN*) to 794 EYD; 25 (NJI 1255, *A212 SAE*) to 8225 KH; 27 (TXY 978, *CRH 182X, 6253 VC, OHE 278X*) to 665 EYL; 28 (YPD 123Y) to OJI 7078; 52 (152 FRH, *E52 URH*) to 834 EYD. Volvo B10M 87 (741 DYE, *A607 UGD*) is now 787 EYC; 145 (IIL 1319, *C50 FRH*) now 80 EYC; 146 (E52 WAG) now EYH 876; 147 (G56 SAG) became 508 DKH then 39 EYD; 148 (F108 NRT) is now 1918 KH. Leyland Leopard 199 (EGV 367Y) is now MIJ 999 and Mercedes-Benz minicoach 214 (G214 RKH) is now 3277 KH. Additionally, prior to sale, Leyland Royal Tiger 7 (3277 KH, *A107 OKH*) was re-registered A189 TAG; 8 (508 DKH, *B108 UAG*) becoming B299 AKH; Optare CityPacer 96 (OJI 7078, *E906 LVE*) became E558 XRH; Leyland Leopard 190 (8225 KH, *GKH 190T*) became RKH 792T and 389 (MIJ 999, *OWF 691X*) became CRH 630X.

Leyland Olympian DPs 539/42 (A239 GHN, B254 RAJ) have lost their coach seats in favour of standard bus seating, but remain to H42/30F capacity. Olympians 550/3 (H550 VAT, F261 RHJ) now have conventional roller blind indicator displays, replacing troublesome electronic units; 553 had its conventional Southend-style display replaced by an electronic unit, but now is back to reliable roller blinds once more. Also converted to manual blinds is Optare Spectra 571 (A1 EYD), the electronic display for which was apparently most unreliable.

Marshall Capital-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, R48 CDB, is one of five such vehicles recently delivered to Maynes, Manchester, for use on routes 171/172 (Withington Hospital-Newton Heath). They replace earlier normal-height Darts, also bodied by Marshall. JOHN YOUNG

Finglands, Rusholme EY

New Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool Alizée C33Ft 367 (R367 WNC) is the Manchester City FC team coach and is luxuriously equipped, carrying latest Finglands livery.

In from Excelsior of Bournemouth is Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C53F 368 (P533 CLJ, *A15 XEL*). Volvo B10M-61 357 (RVY 77) is now with East Yorkshire and is again re-registered, as 3277 KH. Volvo B10M-62/Berkhof 364 (M364 SNB) is now the carrier of RYV 77. Leyland Tiger 356 (HIL 7923), also with East Yorkshire now, is now re-registered 95 EYM.

First CentreWest FG

Deliveries comprise 9.4m Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B31F DM158-64 (R158-64 TLM), 10.2m SLF/Marshall Capital B37F DML179-90 (R179-90 TLM), 9.4m SLF/Marshall Capital B23D DM201/2 (R201/2 TLM) and Marshall Minibus Mk2/B26F ML105/7 (R105/7 VLX). Note that DML165-78 (R165-78 TLM) are to B35F capacity, DML179-90 being B37F.

Mercedes-Benz 811D MA56 (F656 XMS) and MW17 (LDZ 9017) are now back from loan to Arriva The Shires. MCW Metrobuses M1328/40 (C328/40 BUV) are now in driver training yellow and red livery.

Withdrawn Bristol LH6Ls BL4, 28, 35, 36 and 65 (KJD 504/28/35/6P, OJD 65R) have passed to Norths, Sherburn-in-Elmet (dealer), BL85 (OJD 85R) to a private buyer for preservation. MA12 (F612 XMS) is now with First Midland Bluebird, MA70, 72, 85 and 101 (F670/2/85 XMS, VLT 31) going to Greater Manchester, whilst further Renault-Dodges to go north to Leicester are RW66, 68, 70-74/6/8 and 88 (HDZ 5466 etc).

First CityBus FG

New Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B37F 408-14 (R408-14 WPX) all now carry First livery, whilst delivery of 417-27 (R417-27 WPX) is under way.

First Eastern National FG

45-year old former Westcliff-on-Sea Bristol KSW5G/ECW O33/28R 2383 (WNO 479) has been freshly painted in traditional cream and green in readiness for its marathon tour of First Group companies at the end of August, which is to take it from its base at Harwich to London, Bristol, Swansea, Stoke, Manchester, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, York, Leeds, Sheffield, Leicester, Norwich, Chelmsford and then back to Harwich. It recently visited Hants & Dorset Trim at Southampton to have its upper deck floor boarding and linoleum renewed — not bad really when you consider it has been open-top since 1966!

First Leicester FG

New are Scania L113CRL/Wright Axcess Ultralow B40F 344-6 (R344-6 SUT) with ZF transmission.

Ex-Bee Line Renault-Dodge S75/Wright B28F taken into stock and numbered are 701-4 (HDZ 5459/62/75/9). They are now upseated to B30F, but others remain as B28F (or DP28F). The former CentreWest examples in use now number 15 and are 781-95 (HDZ 5481-5/57/87/64/89/90/65/7/9/40/1). Further cast-off S75s now taken into stock here are HDZ 5466/8/70-4/6/8.

Former North Western Dennis Dominator 144 (F636 BKD) was first to emerge from repaint, followed by 148 and 147 (G667 FKA, G629 EKA) and 145 (F637 BKD) last. Ex-Northampton Volvo Citybus/Alexander DP 282 (F87 DVV) is now re-registered to LSU 717.

Further acquisitions are Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner II 2, 3, 7 (P176/7 NAK, N378 EAK) and B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 3500 III 12 (G76 RGG).

Optare Excel demonstrator P447 SWX has been on loan to cover for 303 (R3 LCB), which has been struck by a car that jumped a red light and has had to go back to Optare at Rotherham for repairs. Meanwhile, all other Excels, 301/2/4-10 have also been away, but to East Lancs at Blackburn for repaint out of Leicester colours and into national First pastel livery. Mercedes-Benz demonstrator R267 SDT has also been noted on a brief two-week stay.

Iveco 49.10 732 (F723 PFP) is now back in service after its sojourn in Northampton, where it saw little use. Renault-Dodge S56 759 (J759 NNR) has been withdrawn and is now partly cannibalised. Leyland Leopard coaches 18, 26/8/9, 30 (VNH 168/7W, MPL 127/30W, VNH 166W) have been delicensed, 30 unused although licensed for some time. 27 (VNH 163W) has also been delicensed for some time and 25 (VNH 164W) has not been used in service thus far. Abbey Road has thus been playing host to delicensed 7, 18, 25-30, 185/7, 252, 720/4/6/8-35/7/59/68 as well as London's MCW Metrobuses M330/45 (EYE 330/45V).

Travel West Midlands Mercedes-Benz R280 SDT, Mercedes-Benz coach R267 SDT, Excel demonstrator P447 SWX have now all left as have Leopards 18 and 29 (VNH 168W, MPL 130W) and Leyland Tiger 21 (B569 LSC) for Midland Bluebird, whilst Volvo B10M-61 7 (B857 KNH and Tiger 23 (B160 WRN) have gone to Kirkby, Anston (dealer).

Further Dennis Dominators despatched to Northampton are 205/40/50 (MUT 205W, FUT 240/50V), retaining their Leicester fleetnumbers as they go, but 180/3 (FUT 180/3V) have been delicensed by Northampton and brought back here again, only to be followed by 240/50 a short while later, 240 returning to use here. Dominator 47 (TBC 47X) is the first of this large batch to be delicensed and withdrawn and is now under cannibalisation, 51 (TBC 51X) following and also expected to be stripped for spares. Older 182 and 206 (FUT 182V, MUT 206W) are also now withdrawn. Meanwhile, the first production Dominator, 233 (UFP 233S), is happily now back in officially preserved status again (since late March).

First Manchester FG

Grampian's nomadic Mercedes-Benz O.405G/Alexander AB60T 1 (K1 GRT) has been on loan and tested on service 135.

Acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander B28F 1752-4 (F670/2/4 XMS from CentreWest, whilst Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Alexander H45/29D HRS 277/84V are from Grampian and for use as driver trainers.

Volvo B10BLEs 572/80/6 (R572 SBA etc) and Dennis Dart SLFs 6036/40/3/50/4/60 (R240 SBA etc) are early repaints into pastel livery. B10B 524 (N524 WVR) is now back in traffic once again after extensive accident damage repairs, retaining its allover advertisement for Rochdale Markets.

Early Leyland Lynx 1401 (D501 LNA) has been most ingeniously re-fashioned at the front end with a standard Northern Counties Olympian-style front grille, which looks most attractive. It also has rounded wheelarches and conventional flat skirt panelling, with moulded panels removed.

Atherton-allocated vehicles were redistributed to Bolton (548-52/90-91, 3037/44/6/61/6/81/3/90/2/8/9, 3100/5/20/44/51/63/77/80/90/2, 3211/8/9/33/7/52/6/61-3, 4139, 4539/75, 4607/67, 4943/7/77/81/2), Wigan (1119/20, 3246-8/58/67/70/80/93, 4464/81/2/93/8, 4502/3/25/90/1) and Bury (4357, 4478, 4511) upon closure.

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 3093 (B93 SJA) has been undergoing extensive repairs after a traffic duel with a Metrolink tram last year and is now back, at Queens Road. A surprising return to service (in old livery) at Oldham is Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties 4573 (ANA 573Y) after repairs following severe damage sustained when it was hijacked last November.

Leyland Atlantean 4181 (VBA 181S) has been retained for possible preservation sale. Now withdrawn are MCW Metroriders 1577/98 (E122 RDW, E276 REP), Renault-Dodge 1886 (D886 MDB), Leyland Atlanteans 4300/67 (FVR 300V, ORJ 367W) and 4413/64/78/82/94 (SND 413X etc) and MCW Metrobuses 5146/56 (SND 146X, ANA 156Y).

Metrorider 1592 (E268 REP) is now allocated to the driver training school after use as a temporary trainer at Oldham; Atlanteans 4357 and 4511 (ORJ 357W, SND 511X) are also now dedicated training vehicles.

Leyland Tiger 2 (ESU 920) and Volvo B10M-61 7 (F947 NER) have been sold to Brownrigg of Egremont; Iveco 59.12s 1411/3/4/48/9 (M411/3/4 RND, M248/9 NNF) to Bristol; Metrorider 1650 (D650 MDB) to Morrin of Erskine and 1659/68 (D659/68 NNE) to Yorkshire Travel; Renault S75s 1722/3/5 (H722/3/5 CNC) to PMT (Pennine); Leyland Fleetlines 4090/5 (BVR 90, 95T) and 4952/5/76 (YTE 589/92V, DWH 692W) and Atlantean 4457 (SND 457X) to PVS, Carlton (dealer); Atlantean 4427 (SND 427X) to Wigley, Carlton (dealer), 4506 (SND 506X) to Castle, Speke; Metrobuses 5019/95 (MNC 495W, ORJ 95W) to Fleet Sales & Leasing, Haydock (dealer), 5071 (ORJ 71W) to unconfirmed buyer, 5098 (ORJ 98W) to Nova Scotia, Winsford), 5099 (ORJ 99W) to unidentified buyer for scrap and 5134/5/82/9 (SND 134/5X, ANA 182/9Y) to Brewers; Dart SLF 6099 (P748 HND) goes to Cheshire Bus & Coach Rentals, Knutsford (dealer).

First Northampton FG

Now withdrawn are East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dominators 201/2 (FUT 180/3V) and Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopards 24, 28 and 30 (NED 433W, MAP 349W, GWV 931V), all acquired in 1996 for schools contracts. 28 and 30 lost their cherished registration marks LSU 717 and WSU 481 for their previous registrations before withdrawal. Similar 23 (WSU 480) is now FRX 868T, all these ex-Mairs Coaches.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus DP 87 (F87 DVV) has been strangely transferred to Leicester, where it is completely non-standard. Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Falcons 627/30 (C107/11 SDX) have also been despatched to Leicester, but still leaving 628/9/31 here.

Now received in partial replacement for withdrawn vehicles here, are withdrawn Leicester Dennis Dominator DDA131/East Lancs H43/33F 205 (NFP 205W) and DDA120/East Lancs H43/33F 240/50 (FUT 240/50V), these being amongst Leicester's oldest remaining examples.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — FirstGroup
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Thought to be the first S-reg bus is S1 EMS of Express Motors, Penygroes, for a new service due to commence on 1 August linking the railways at Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Blaneau Ffestiniog. The vehicle is a Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF.
R. L. WILSON

Intended for Merseytravel's third SMART route which commenced on 1 June in Wirral, but seen here prior to this on route 9, is Wirral Peninsular 7550 (R550 ABA), a Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF. Wirral Peninsular is not using the MTL North fleetname.
R. L. WILSON

Courtesy of Matt Cooper of the Midland Counties PSV Society, the full picture of the emergency hire of vehicles following severe rain on 9/10 April can now be given. St James garage itself was flooded and so vehicles were unable to be used on 10 April. No fewer than 37 vehicles were drafted in from sister First companies, these being Badgerline/Cityline Volvo B10M-55/Alexander DP 108/10 (D108/10 GHY), Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde 228 (L228 AAB) and Leyland Lynxes 1639/52/3 (H639/52/3 YHT); Eastern Counties Bristol VRT/SL3 285 (VEX 285X) and most appropriately, ex-Northampton VRT/SL3s 336/7 (ABD 72, 73X); Eastern National Leyland Olympian DPs 4010/2/3/5/8/21 (C410 HJN etc); Leeds City Link Scania N113DRB/Alexander 8005/14/22/9/36 (G805 JYG, H614/22/9/36 VNW), N113DRB/Northern Counties 8007/8/10 (H807/8/10 TWX) and Leicester Dennis Dominator/East Lancs 45 (TBC 45X), 57, 58, 60, 62, 71/4/5/6 (VAY 57, 58X, XJF 60, 62Y, A71/4/5/6 FRY), MCW Metrobus/Alexander 266 (ULS 642X), Leyland Tiger/Alexander 401-3 (F50, 28 ENF, G53 RND) and Dennis Falcon/Northern Counties 627 (C107 SDX). Emergency tickets were used on all these as Northampton's main module was out of action and no common ticket issue equipment was fitted. Native Volvo Citybus 86 was actually used by the Police as a road-block to stop traffic going down onto flooded roads at one point.

First PMT FG

New Scania L113CRL/Wright SSS874/5/8/9 (R874/5/8 ERE, R879 HRF) are initially at work at Adderley Green, but are scheduled for Birkenhead's 'SMART' services 41/41A (Woodchurch, Birkenhead & Mill Park). Due are SSS876/7/80/1 (R876/7 ERE, R880/1 HRF) and, for the same services, Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s IDC977-81 (R977-81 NVT) and further Wright-bodied Scanias as SSS810-9/20/1 (R810 NVT etc).

Acquisitions from Greater Manchester are Renault S75/Northern Counties B17FL MRP533-5 (H722/3/5 CNC), for a contract at Pennine which requires vehicles equipped with a tail-lift. On loan are Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds N590/5 WND, temporarily numbered MMM86, 87, to cover for new Mercedes-Benz Varios which are having faults rectified.

Turners' attractive brown and rich cream livery has been retained on a few vehicles; unfortunately, Olympian DOG740 (A740 GFA) is now rather inappropriately allocated to Pennine at Ashton-under-Lyne and is thereby at work in Tameside in this livery.

PVS, Barnsley (dealer) has taken redundant Mercedes-Benz L608Ds MMM99, 132/7, 200 (C683 LGE, C132/7 VRE, D160 VRP) and VRTs DVL640/3-5, 704/14/32 (ODM 409V, RLG 430V, RMA 443V, WTU 488W, GRF 704/14V, NEH 732W) and DVG615/9/24 (DCA 526X, EJO 490V, AHU 515V) along with fire-damaged Renault-Dodge S56s MRP517/24 (E817/24 HBF), whilst Roberts, Cadishead now has L608Ds MMM123/4/35/52/5/95 (C123/4/35 VRE, D152/5 BEH, D122 PGA).

First Provincial FG

The next batch of Dennis Dart SLFs is due imminently, whilst the most recent batch has now completely been repainted out of Provincial's cream and red livery and into pastel colours. Darts 610/5-7/9/21-3 are now route-branded for services 17/18 on their cove panels, being followed by an official launch.

Ex-Bristol Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B52F fleetnumbers confirmed are 423-7 (BOU 1, 3V, DHW 349W, BOU 7, 4V). However, 425/6 have been withdrawn and cannibalised without having been used or their fleetnumbers carried; their remains have quickly passed to PVS, Barnsley (dealer).

Joining the fleet is an as-yet unregistered Dodge/Reeve Burgess B39F from the MoD for use as a driver trainer alongside 966 (D562 HPO). 965 (BDL 65T) has been withdrawn accordingly.

Leyland National 308/9/13/28 (PCG 921/2M, JBP 131P, WFX 253S) and Leyland National 2s 412/23 (MSO 12W, BOU 1V) have also been withdrawn, 412 being non-standard as the only short-wheelbase Leyland National 2 in stock and so never popular at Hoeford apparently. 328 was an accident victim and 423 was another ex-Bristol example not to have entered service, being found beyond economic repair when received in damaged condition. It was cannibalised for all available spare parts however prior to disposal as a hulk for scrap.

Previously-withdrawn Leyland Nationals 302/3/9/13/28/61 and 423 (HOR 414/5L, PCG 922M, JBP 131P, WFX 253S, AYR 344T, BOU 1V) have all passed to PVS, Barnsley (dealer) for scrap.

First Western National FG

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander AM B28F 5021/2 (F706, 645 XMS) are now in stock and at Camborne ex-Uxbridge Buses, 5021 carrying First Western National fleetnames on its former livery.

Fishwick, Leyland

New coaching stock comprises Van Hool-bodied DAF SB3000s R61, 62 GNW.

Leyland Nationals 6, 11, 28 and 34 (NFR 559/60T, FBV 524S, XCW 957R) have been taken out of service and stored.

Flights, Birmingham

New are Plaxton Premiere-bodied Dennis Javelins R771-4 WOB.

Glossopdale Bus Company, Padfield

New minis in stock are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 R276/7 CBU.

Green Triangle, Bolton

A new operator which has won some tendered contracts in the Wigan area. Vehicles reported in use are new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 R948/9 AMB from Cheshire Bus & Coach Rentals (dealer).

Halton Transport

Dennis Darts 79-81 have been specially repainted in red and blue with dark blue stripe with cream fronts to mark the breakaway of Widnes from Cheshire County Council on 1st April.

Happy Al's, Birkenhead

Further Leyland Nationals taken into stock from Volvo Bus are EUM 888T and UHG 728R.

The original identities of many Bristol VRTs and Leyland Nationals are being obliterated by re-registrations — VRs KJO 508W, TWS 907T and HWJ 929W becoming ALZ 3536/42, 6403 respectively, Leyland National CWX 666T and Leyland National 2s SNS 822W and DBV 838W becoming ALZ 3566, 4516 and 6420 respectively. TWS 907T was previously reported as ALZ 3920 — which is correct?

Leyland Olympian coach ALS 43Y has been scrapped some time ago.

Harris, Grays

A further pair of DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine II is R381/2 GTW.

Hedingham Omnibuses

A youthful arrival is Volvo B6-50/Alexander Dash B40F L287 (L833 YDS) from Henderson Travel of Hamilton.

Jonckheere-bodied Leyland Tiger L175 (A331 VHB) has been withdrawn and sold to Roydon Coach Travel, via Lodge of High Easter, which did not operate it; Duple-bodied Tiger L226 (129 SDV, *B288 OGV*) has passed to Carnell of Sutton Bridge.

Hulleys, Baslow

New Dennis Javelin 245/Plaxton Premiere **320** C53F 6 (R140 XWF), had to return to Plaxtons for accident damage repair within days of delivery. The previous vehicle new here was 1956 Bedford SB/Duple Super Vega 402 BRB!

An acquisition from Reay's Coaches of Fletchertown is Mercedes-Benz 711D/Onyx C24F 1 (N847 YHH), placed in service alongside the existing 1, Mercedes-Benz 609D F62 XRP, but this has now passed to Berwyn Coaches of Trefor.

KD Coach Hire, Dyserth

A most interesting development is the acquisition of the three Routemasters recently withdrawn by Black Prince of Morley, for use on a new seven days-a-week service from Towyn to Gronant via Kimmel Bay, Rhyl Promenade, Y-Ffrith, Fford Penrhwylfa, Fford Isa, Prestatyn and Pontins on an hourly frequency. They are Routemaster/Park Royal H36/28R LDS 341A (*WLT 441*), named *Rudolph*, ALM 60B named *Rosie* and CUV 122C named *Rodney*, the names being carried adjacent to the platform harking back to Clydeside Scottish practice. Another RM is reported due here.

Kinchbus, Barrow-upon-Soar

Now in stock are Leyland Nationals FRA 530/1V from Trent Buses.

Leyland Atlantean open-topper STK 135T, Leyland Titan CUL 81V, Leyland National TVP 852S and Leyland National 2s MSO 15W and PNW 599W have been withdrawn.

King's Ferry, Gillingham

New are Neoplan N212H Jetliner C35Ft **N**601 EEV and N122/3 Skyliner/CH57/20Dt R330 YKK, R418 AKJ, R998 KKO and R542 YKO.

London Central GA

A further AEC Routemaster mechanically refurbished with Scania engine is RM1097 (97 CLT), whilst RM687 and 928 (WLT 687, 928) are freshly painted. Although many are now mechanically upgraded and internally refurbished, externally most RMs are rather down at heel at present. RM868 has lost its registration mark to Volvo Olympian NV68 (R268 LGH), now WLT 868.

Dennis Darts DRL72 and 92 now work the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital contract (both now in full LC livery), whilst MCW Metrorider MRL201 now has a thin white stripe above its windows, which dips down its front pillars.

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MA122/5/8-30/2 (G122 PGT, H425/8-30/2 XGK) have passed to Milton Keynes Citybus, Leyland Titan T352 (KYV 352X) to Allco Passenger Vehicles, Eastcote (dealer).

London Coaches AA

Newly-acquired ex-Arriva London North MCW Metrobuses M310, 509, 689, 707/48 (BYX 301V, GYE 509W, KYV 689, 707/48X) have been away at Chassis Developments of Leighton Buzzard for open-top conversion, ex-Arriva London North M389, 533 and 754 (GYE 389W, GYE 533W, KYV 754X) and ex-Arriva London South M525 (GYE 525W) being converted at Enfield, with one more to complete the batch of 10.

AEC Routemaster coach RCL2245 (CUV 245C) has been sold to Corona Beers, having first being rebuilt to a lowered overall height of 4 metres for touring Europe. It joins RCL2250 (CUV 250C), similarly rebuilt earlier.

London Coaches (Kent)

AEC Routemaster open-topper RM450 (WLT 450) is now to O36/10R configuration and remains in use in connection with Medway FM in overall red with appropriate signwriting for 107.9FM as well as North Kent Express fleetnames and logos. It retains its outward-folding centre door, behind which used to be a wheelchair lift — perhaps thereby making it O36/10D perhaps!

North Devon 852 (R852 TFJ), a Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 is seen in Barnstaple on layover between workings on town service 12. MARK BAILEY

London General GA

New Putney-based Volvo Olympians NV161/3 (R361/3 LGH) are at work without service 74 branding.

Freshly-repainted London Central AEC Routemaster RM202 (VLT 202) remains on loan based at Waterloo and is to be seen rubbing shoulders with RMLs on service 11, still carrying London Central fleetnames and logos.

Volvo B10M-50 VC39 (839 DYE) suffered severe damage in Balham High Road recently.

London Traveller

New Dennis Arrow/East Lancs Pyoneer DPH45/31F R1 LTB was on display at the Brighton Coach Rally in late April, but its appearance in service was still awaited a month later.

London United/Westlink

New deliveries during May for route 281 (Hounslow-Tolworth) were VA32/3 (R932/3 YOV), Volvo Olympians with Alexander (Belfast) H47/25D bodywork. The rest of the batch, VA34-54 (R934-54 YOV) were expected to arrive shortly afterwards, ready for service for the beginning of July.

Coach-seated Leyland Olympian/Leyland DPH43/29F L312 (G312 UYT) has been downgraded with bus seating in its upper saloon, whilst standard bus-seated Ls allocated to service 140 continue to be painted and route-branded, L295 and 301/3 being latest, such that L293-308 now all carry 140 branding. L309-14 are still in London Buses livery.

Leyland Nationals LS29 and 116 (KJD 529P, THX 116S) have been sold for scrap while LS251 (THX 251S) has gone to Thames Valley Training.

The first long Routemaster, ER880, has been repainted in its unique red, silver and white livery.

Ludlows, Halesowen

New are Mercedes-Benz O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B33F R89, 91 EOL, at work on service 007.

Mainline

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B29F 123-38 (R125-38 XDT) at Greenland Road. The 11 Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer SPDs ordered by Northern Bus are to be delivered to Mainline, but to standard company specification; these are to be supplemented by an additional SPD on long-term loan for a two-year evaluation trial against the Volvo B10BLE.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 4001 (K946 JWE) is now renumbered 501.

Further Dennis Dominators refurbished are 2474/83/90 (D474 OWE etc) and 2205 (NKU 205X) is now reinstated for further service at Greenland Road from Reserve, 2233 (SDT 233Y) also being back in traffic. Dual-purpose MCW Metrobus 1951 (C951 LWJ) is another to have its rear end rebuilt, resulting in a smaller rear lower deck window.

Renault-Dodge S56 233 (F233 EWG) has gone into reserve stock. The latest listing for reserve stock is that it comprises Renault-Dodges 202/33/52, Metrobuses 1858, 1918/27/31/41/3, Dominators 2113/6/21/8/9/36/56/78/96, 2233, 2318 and 2441.

Mercedes-Benz O.405N 1405 (R280 SDT) has been returned off-loan. MCW Metrobuses 1944/6/53 (B944/6 FET, C953 LWJ) are withdrawn.

Marchants, Cheltenham

Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B49F **RDC 375X** is now in use here, often on service M27 (Gotherington-Cheltenham).

Mayne, Manchester

Strong investment in smart new stock continues with the delivery of new Marshall Capital-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 45-49 (R45-49 CDB), branded for services 171/172 (Withington Hospital-Newton Heath).

Acquisitions also continue, with the arrival of former Trent DAF MB230DKFL615/Plaxton C53F D639/40 WNU.

Outgoing Darts are Marshall bodied 126-9 (L26, 27 FNE, K28, 29 XBA) — the first Marshall Darts replaced by Marshall Darts? The ex-Chesterfield Dennis Falcons have been dispensed with to Liyell of Willenhall after being advertised for sale en-bloc — they were 44-48 (A44-48 YWJ).

McNaughton, Rochester

An open-top Ford Transit is now available for the Pleasure Drive, Medway Valley Day Tour and Rochester City Tour undertaken by this operator

Merseypride, Bootle

Acquisitions here can often be relied upon to provide some interest, but the latest are rather exceptional! They comprise rebuilt/rebodied Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties DP42F TKU 466K from Blackpool Transport; Leyland-DAB articulated saloon CRM 927T from Wirral Borough Council's Education Department and the re-acquisition of Leyland Atlantean SND 462X. Additions to the heritage fleet are, amazingly, rare Bristol VRLLH6L/ECW CH42/18Ct PRN 79K from Cleanacres, Cheltenham (and is apparently aimed at a ferry contract) and ex-Atomic Energy Research AEC Regent V 240 AJB.

A new Optare Excel is reported on order for service 290.

Atlantean 79 (AFY 191X) is currently on loan to the Ritzy Night Club at Bromborough and it is due to be placed into heritage/preservation stock upon its return, 77 (JKW 331W) being earmarked for a preservation home too. 96 (ANA 612Y) has not yet been used and is in store.

Optare Excel 88 (R633 DNH) is now re-registered R88 MMS, Dennis Dart SLF 90 (R383 KHC) similarly becoming R90 MMS.

Withdrawn Leyland Atlanteans SBD 449/62X and ANA 620Y have been sold.

MTL London MT

Fourteen 10.2m DML-class Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs were due for services 217/231 by 4 July, along with one similar, but 9.4m, DMS-class example to bolster the allocation for service 234. Those noted so far are DML19-22 (R619-22 VEG), which have Marshall Capital B31F bodywork. DML28 will be R638 VEG, while the DMS will be SDMS12 (R699 MEW).

Also due are 17 further DMSs (an unfortunate choice of code perhaps, given the track record of theprevious DMS class in London!) for routes 326 and 384, and 15 dual-door DMLs for the C11.

MTL's SLF/Marshall B42F 7141 (R411 XFL) was noted making its way along service C2's route in mid-April, possibly on loan; it is being used as a demonstrator by Marshall.

MCW Metrobus M1392 (C392 BUV) is now allocated as a driver trainer.

MTL North MT

It is pleasing to report the delivery of new double-deckers in the shape of Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II 0309-30 (R309-30 WVM), for service 14C (Croxteth-City), along with yet more new Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B37F as 7546-54/6-71 (R546 ABA etc). SLF demonstrator 7142 (YDZ 2082) is at work regularly on the Albert Dock circular.

A major intake of acquired stock occurred on 15 March, when the fleet of **Village, Speke** was taken over: Leyland Fleetline FE30AGRs: Roe H43/30F-bodied 904/21 (RCH 286/5R); Northern Counties H43/30F-bodied 908/11/2/23 (XRR 291/5/3/S); Park Royal H43/30F-bodied 920 (SDA 658S); Alexander H45/33F-bodied 928-32 (ASD 25-7/9T); MCW H43/32F-bodied 933/4 (VCU 402T, WDA 914T);
Leyland Titans: TNTL11/1RF/Park Royal H47/26F 2007/14/5 (GNF 7V etc); TNLXB/1RF/Park Royal H44/24D 2042/89 (WYV 42T, CUL 89V), 2149/76/95 (CUL 149V etc), 2216/26/8 (CUL 216V, EYE 226/8V); TNLXB/1RF/Park Royal H44/26D 2084 (CUL 84V), 2112/38 (CUV 112/38V); TNLXB/1RF/Park Royal H44/22D 2087 (CUL 87V), 2165 (CUL 165V); TNLXB/1RF/Leyland H44/24D 2279 (GYE 279W); TNLXB/2RR/Leyland H44/26D 2291 (KYN 291X), 2317/92 (KYV 317/92X), 2493 (KYV 493X), 2510/24/30 (KYV 510X etc), 2635/67 (NUW 635/67Y), 2727/45 (OHV 727/45Y), 2807/99 (OHV 807Y, A899 SYE); TNLXB/2RR/Leyland H44/24D 2342/71/3 (KYV 342/71/3X), 2419/33/8 (KYV 419X etc), 2689 (NUW 689Y); TNLXB/2RR/Leyland H44/28F 2429 (KYV 429X); B15/Park Royal H45/32F 2999 (UJI 6314); Leyland National 11351A/1R/B52F 6080 (EGB 80T;) Mercedes-Benz 307D/Reeve Burgess C8F D927 LYC; Bedford-Beadle/Beadle B35R JFM 990

All the Fleetlines, the Leyland National and non-standard Titans 2007/14/5 and 2999 are due for early withdrawal. The majority of the Titans very quickly received MTL livery, however, dovetailing with extant examples in this fleet.

MTL North fleetnames are now appearing on repainted vehicles after a period where newly outshopped vehicles were left anonymous.

Volvo B6/Plaxton 7250 (L250 TKA) is being tried at Gillmoss in connection with a type of anti-assault screen for drivers.

Volvo B10B/Wright Endurance 6539 (M539 WHF) was stolen from Garston by two youths recently, being retrieved from Speke Boulevard after demolishing two lamp posts and some railings; damage sustained is so severe that it is expected to be written off stock.

The last double-deckers have now lost Liverbus livery in favour of standard MTL and were Volvo Olympians 1218/9 (M218/9 YKC), the latter initially in service with incorrect fleetnumber 0219 applied.

The driving school has been busy as a result of a mass recruitment campaign, bringing Leyland Olympians 0174/5 (E916/28 KYR), Leyland Atlanteans 1449, 1524/51 and 1612 (GKA 449L, GKA 524M, OLV 551M, GKA 37N), Dennis Dart 7248 (L248 TKA), Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 7946/52 (K946 OEM, G952 RFL) and, remarkably, Arriva North West Leyland National 941 (HFM 186N) new to Crosville. Rebuilt and DP Atlantean 1847 (WWM 924W) retains Sightseers livery although it is working with the driving school, too. Other vehicles have been drafted into the school almost on a daily basis.

Consequent upon the closure of the MTL Travel Coaching Unit, Dennis Javelins 7032/3 (F32 ALV, IIL 2503), Volvo B10M-60s 7034/5/7/8 (J34, 35 MKB, HIL 5697/8) and B10M-62s 7041-4 (N41, 42 BWM, P463/4 JWB) have all been withdrawn and advertised for sale.

Leyland Atlantean 1744 (LKF 744R) and Leyland National 2 6150 (XLV 150W) have been cut up at Heysham depot but happier news is that Atlantean 1828 (TWM 212V) is now with a private owner in Liverpool for preservation.

Heysham's Leyland National 2 6203 (NHH 381W) is now reinstated, but sister 6202 (NHH 379W) has suffered fire damage and has been stripped to a hulk along with similar 6141 (XLV 141W), also a fire victim. 6149 (XLV 149W) is now in use as a seat store.

An unusual visitor to Green Lane has been Thamesdown's Northern Counties-bodied Daimler CVG6-30 JAM 145E, in connection with a Coca Cola promotion.

North Birmingham Busways, Erdington

Recent additions to stock are ex-Brighton & Hove/Brighton Blue Bus Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/East Lancs H43/31F TYJ 4, 9S.

The company now undertakes work on preserved vehicles, recent interesting visitors being BMMO C1 KHA 301 and D9 EHA 415D, Birmingham City Guy Arab MOF 9 along with West Midlands Leyland Fleetline WDA 900T.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — FirstGroup
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Plymouth CityBus 18 (R118 OFJ) is the third Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF pictured on these pages with front-end styling previously only supplied to FirstGroup companies. It is seen here at Whitleigh. MARK BAILEY

Northern Bus, North Anston

The final day of operation in its present form was 9 May, prior to full absorption into Mainline Group. Bristol RE/ECW HFM 594D was in evidence during the day and for the final operation, the 23:20 departure from Sheffield on service 208 to Dinnington. Remarkably, Bristol SC4LK/ECW 782 EFM also operated on service 208 on the day, returning from Sheffield on the 20:00 departure!

Dodge 2602, *Droopy* (F221 EWG) and MCW Metrorider 2643 (D643 MDB) were noted on hire to Mainline prior to the absorption date. However, it should be noted that Northern Bus is to continue as an operator with a fleet of 10 Bristol VRT/SL3s to cover an eight-bus network of schools services.

Oxford Bus Company GA

Leyland Titan 966 (KYV 381X) has gained a reprieve as a temporary driver trainer. Coaches 153-5/60/2 now carry the new Citylink all-blue livery, replacing the previous blue/grey scheme. Dennis Javelins 50 and 51 (K750/1 UJO) and MCW Metroriders 755/68 (E755 VJO, F505 CBO) have been withdrawn, 755/68 going on loan to Wycombe Bus from early May.

Javelins 50 and 51 have been sold to Cambridge Pullman of Isleham Ely, 51/3-5 (K751 UJO etc) to Lewis's Coaches of Llanrhystud, DAF MB230s 133/4 (E133/4 YUD) to Browns Coaches of Builth Wells, DAF SB3000s 135/9 (F135/9 LJO) to Heyfordian Travel, Upper Heyford, 136-8 (F136-8 LJO) to Richards Bros of Moylgrove and SB2305s 140/1 (J140/1 NJO) to Harrods Coaches of Wormegay.

Leyland Leopard/ECW formerly 30 (VUD 30X) is now with Oxford Bus Museum for preservation ex-McEwan of Amisford, twin 29 (VUD 29X) also being owned as a source of spare parts having last served with Millat of Coatbridge.

Wycombe Bus has now withdrawn Mercedes-Benz 811D 701 (G621 XLO), whilst Leyland Titan 966 has gone back to Oxford main-fleet stock for repaint and reinstatement as noted above.

Previously-withdrawn Bristol VRT/SL3s 444/61 (AAP 651T, HJB 461W) are now with Fishwick of Leyland.

P&O Stena Line, Dover

Twenty-five-year old Leyland National 1151/1R/0402 /B30D NPD 145/59/60L continue in use here, recently transferred from the former Stena Sealink of Ashford.

Pete's Travel, West Bromwich

Acquisitions are of Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds N257/9 DUR.

Phoenix North West, Blackpool

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 817/8 (R107/8 GNW) are now at work in full Handybus black/yellow livery.

Pilkington, Accrington

Five Leyland Nationals are newly into stock, these being BVP 766V from Black Prince of Morley; OEP 794R and AWN 812V from Brewers; JHJ 144V from Linkfast, Craven Arms and Leyland National 2 VBG 95V from Aintree Coachline. Quickly re-registered are PIB 3488 (*BVP 766V*), PIL 2083 (*AWN 812V*) and PIL 2108 (*JHJ 144V*).

Northern Counties-bodied Dodge S46 D422 NNA is now repainted after purchase solely for cannibalisation; it is to be re-registered before use.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PIB 8117 (*KUM 528L*) has been sold to Griffiths, Brinkworth but Duple-bodied Leopard PIB 7965 (*VRP 530S*) has been scrapped

Preston Bus

First of the final batch of nine Optare MetroRiders to arrive are 35-37 (R435-7 NFR), to be followed by 38-40 and 17-19, thereby neatly completing a fleetnumber series of 1-40 for the MetroRider marque.

Blue and silver-liveried Optare Excel demonstrator R98 HUA has been at work on service 11 (Bus Station-Gamull Lane), but had to return to Optare with damage to its nearside after just four days. Further demonstrators are due are expected to be a Plaxton Prestige-bodied DAF SB220, a Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLE and a Dennis Dart/Plaxton Super Pointer SPD.

Leyland Atlantean 151 (GFV 151W) is now with ABC, Formby, 153/4 (GFV 153/4W) with Proctor, Bedale, 155 (GFV 155W) with The Eagre, Morton, 157 (GFV 157W) passing to Thorn of Bubwith. Renault S56 81 (E81 MHG) has been withdrawn and quickly sold to DPS of Blackburn, 59 and 86 being thought due for withdrawal next.

Further on the saga of East Lancs-bodied 158 (**OBV 158X**) is that it was sold to The Eagre, developed an engine fault and was returned home here for remedial work, older twin 155 being sent by way of stop-gap replacement. The Eagre then requested to retain 155; meanwhile, 158 is now fitted with a new engine, is now smartly repainted in 'black line'-style livery and is now back in service in immaculate condition — having been withdrawn for several months before sale! Sister 159 (OBV 159X) has also been freshly outshopped in similar livery style.

An open-day is to be held on 27 September in conjunction with the event at the British Commercial Vehicle Museum at Leyland to commemorate 40 years of the Leyland Atlantean. It is hoped that a special service will operate using preserved Atlanteans between Preston and the museum — with some 40 preserved vehicles expected at the depot. Meanwhile, Preston is enterprisingly due to repaint an East Lancs-bodied Atlantean, probably 181 or 182 (DRN 1, 2Y) into pre-1967 maroon and cream livery for this too.

Red Arrow Express, Smethwick

To clarify, three Marshall Capital-bodied Dennis Dart SLF are now in stock, as R718-20 BNF.

Dart N608 WND has gone back off-hire to Cheshire Bus & Coach, being replaced by SLF/Plaxton Pointer B37F P741/8 HND, all three being in fleet livery of white with blue skirt and route-branded to services 33 or 97, P741 HND not being branded.

Renault Dodge E989 SJA is also now in use, but Mercedes-Benz C246 OFE has not been owned here.

Ex-Brighton Blue Bus D455 YPN, E450 **E**AP and E458 WJK are at work, similar E451 EAP, E461/3 CWV being now out of use. E452 EAP has been withdrawn and sold to Traction Motors of Birmingham, E460 WJK to a buyer in Anglesey, E462 CWV to Cityspeed Travel of Newquay and E464 CWV to Summercourt Travel, also of Newquay.

Thanks to Chris Jeavons for correcting and updating notes on this fleet.

RoadCar YT

To summarise, MCW Metroriders are now renumbered 21/3/7/9-32/4/6/9 (D521/3/5/7/9-32/4/6 SKY, E539 VKY), Renault S75s similarly being 126-9/34/7-41/8/54/5/73/81-91/4/5 (H126-9 AML, J134 HME, K737 THL, K378-80 RFE, H191 YMA, G448 LKW, G294/5 MWU, G873/81-91/4/5 WML) these renumbered so as to make way for anticipated MetroRiders and S75s due to arrive from Yorkshire Traction stock.

Vehicles allocated to Lincoln City at the time of its name being dissolved were Leyland National 2s 201/4/14/90/2/6/7 (EDT 201/4/14V, RFS 590V, PNW 605W, UWY 76, 70X), Bristol B21/Alexander 259 (YBJ 159X), Volvo B6/East Lancs 327/8 (N327/8 JTL), Renault S75/Reeve Burgess 181/2 (G881/2 WML), Leyland Olympian/East Lancs 642-5 (DFW 42X, KTL 43-45Y) and Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties 1335/41/6 (LEO 735Y, ANA 601, 546Y).

Readers wishing to keep in touch with Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire operators are recommended to the *Lincolnshire & East Yorkshire Transport Review*, which is kindly made regularly available to Fleet News. This covers major and minor operators, as well as rail (and sea) topics, all for an annual subscription of just £6. For further details, please send an SAE to the Secretary, Ron Pudsey at 24 Cotswold Drive, Waltham, Grimsby DN37 0EA.

Rossendale Transport

Keen purchasing brings Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3035/ Marshall B40F 126/7 (L26, 27 FNE) and 9.8SDL3012/ Marshall B40F 128/9 (K28, 29 SBA) on to fleet strength from Maynes of Manchester and Dennis Javelin 12SDA/Berkhof C50Ft 347 (M347 MCY) from D. Coaches, Morriston.

A minor renumbering sees Leyland Atlantean 128 (VDY 528T) become 38 and 136/7 (CJK 36, 37V) become 36 and 37 respectively and Rawtenstall-based MCW Metroriders 68, 69 (F168/9 DET) are renumbered 38, 39 respectively.

Leyland Tigers 383/4 (LIB 1183/4) have passed to Border of Burnley, but MCW Metrorider 5 (D21 CFL), 41 (F111 YWO) and Leyland Atlantean 197 (JKW 297W) have passed to Wigley of Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Sargeants, Kington

Former Eastern National Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2RHSp/ECW CH45/28F MIB 6189 (*B691 BPU*) is acquired and is smartly outshopped in full red and gold livery. It is to replace Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline LMS 157W, likely to be retained as a spare.

Plaxton-bodied Bedford YMT AVJ 900V and Duple-bodied YMT AUJ 732V are now both derelict at the yard following cannibalisation.

Shaw Hadwin

New Jonckheere Mistral-bodied Volvo B10M-62s are R791 NEC and R171 SUT, in uninspired allover white.

Shearings

New deliveries for the season comprise Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool Alizée T9 C46Ft 901/4 (R901/4 YBA), 916-22/3/6/7-9 (R917 YBA etc), Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C50Ft and B10M-62/Jonkheere 946 (R946 YNF) of as-yet unconfirmed capacity. 901/4 are early examples of Van Hool's new T9 body.

Now sold to Moseley, Glenmavis are withdrawn Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60s 187/92/5/7, 200 (H187 DVM etc).

Smiths, Shennington NX

New are Dennis Dart SLF/Wright B36F 130-3 (R84-87 GNW).

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of Wright-bodied Dennis Darts 176-80 (KDZ 5801-5) from Merry Hill and the departure of Leyland Nationals 102/4/5/19/20 (CBV 785S, UHG 734R, NTC 623M, and BVP 773/61V) to Merry Hill, MCW Metroriders 639/64 (D639 NOE, F664 YOG) to West Midlands and storage.

Leyland National 101 (UHG 734R) is now renumbered 104, Mercedes-Benz 814Ds 263-5 (R263-5 XDA) becoming 166-8.

Leyland Nationals 104-6/15/7 (UHG 725R, NTC 623/19/06/12M) have been withdrawn, 117 passing to Whiting of Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Southern Vectis

Withdrawals due are of some five Bristol VRT/SL3s, changes in school transport requirements leading the remaining five to have a stay of execution, those likely to be retained being closed-top 681-5 (FDL 681/2V, DPX 683-5W). Closed-top 679 (FDL 679V) is due for transfer to Solent Blue Line, ever-useful convertible open-top 505 (UFX 857S) earmarked to go to Bath Bus Company for sightseeing, convertible 506 (UFX 858S) to go to Westbrook Travel for use on Ryde open-top circular service 88.

This year, another franchise agreement sees the operation of the famous service 44 ('Shanklin's Pony') by new operator the **Traditional Motor Bus Company**, being a partnership of three longstanding enthusiasts in the island who see the potential to develop the appeal of this service for tourists. The 44 is consequently now extended to and from Sandown Zoo. TMB has leased the rare open-top Bristol RELL6G 864 (TDL 564K) along with convertible open-top VR 503 (VDL 613S), to which will be added convertible 504 (UFX 856S), which will receive a partial repaint to distinguish it from Southern Vectis vehicles.

Heritage Bristol RELL6G closed-topper 863 (TDL 563K) will now be separated from its twin 864, for which it has been regarded as an inclement-weather back-up. It will be licensed to act as a summer duplicate in anticipation of quantities of welcome incoming students requiring transport!

All vehicles in the old green and sand livery are now outshopped in latest livery, the last in the old scheme being Olympian 713 (G713 WDL), whilst newer 742 (K742 ODL) has now joined twin 743 (K743 ODL) in the new Island Explorer scheme. Existing Island Explorer Olympians remaining in the previous Explorer livery — 711/35-41 — have had IE branding removed and retain the livery for the summer. Blackgang Chine overall advertisement 693 (WDL 693Y) is also to gain fleet livery.

And finally . . . following poems on the Underground and the Paris Metro, now we have poems on Southern Vectis minibuses! Local authors have supplied the works, on a variety of Island and abstract themes.

Traffic Manager Phil Stockley is warmly thanked for kindly supplying source data once more for this popular fleet for Fleet News.

Springfield Coachways, Wigan

Another Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F is R185 OCW. R183-5 OCW are now at work in allover white, with blue fleetnames.

Newly-won operations see evening and Sunday services in the Wigan area, as well as daytime services between Ashton and Wigan.

Stagecoach Burnley & Pendle ST

Inter-company transfers see the return of Volvo B10M-50 1304 (F104 XCW) from Ribble, but the outward transfer to that concern of Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 786/7/97 (E86, 87 HRN, G97 MRN), B10M-50 1302 (E102 JFV) and Bristol VRT/SL3 2067 (FFR 167S).

709D 795 (F995 DRN, *XFK 305, F95 XBV*) has been withdrawn and sold to Davies of Bettws Gwerfil Goch.

Stagecoach Cheltenham District ST

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 690 (L690 CDD) has been reinstated, whilst Iveco 49.10/Mellor B17F 604 (R604 KDD) has been on loan to the Gloucestershire Employment Service.

Volvo B6 845 (M845 EMW) has gone to Swindon & District. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 686/9 (L686/9 CDD) are now with Cheltenham Gloucester.

Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester ST

Acquisitions from Cheltenham District are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 686/9 (L686/9 CDD) now with Stroud Valleys fleetnames, whilst incomers from Swindon & District are Volvo B6LE/Alexander B35F 853/4 (P853/4 PWR) now with Easyrider Gloucester Citybus fleetnames, brought into stock for to meet a shared low-floor vehicle requirement split with Swanbrook for service 12 to Quedgeley. 711 now carries Gloucester Citybus fleetnames also.

Leyland National 2s 377/8 (RHG 880X, NHH 382W) and Iveco 49.10s 606/9/10 (R606/9/10 HDD) have been withdrawn. 377/8 have gone to Swindon & District, 606/9/10 to Devon General and Mercedes 709Ds 680-2 (G680-2 AAD) to Circle Line, Gloucester.

Stagecoach Cumberland ST

Acquisitions to record are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 1528 (N885 AVV) from Stagecoach Manchester, the fleetnumber being out of sequence owing to older Mercedes 528 (D528 RCK) which is still on fleet strength. For ancillary stock comes Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Alexander 3005 (EGB 52T) for use as a driver trainer, having last been traced with Clydeside.

Recent Volvo B10M-55s 793-5 (R793-5 URM) have been away at Carlisle Commercials at Morecambe to have their electronic indicator displays altered to show the numeral to the nearside.

Bristol VRT/SL3 2002 (CBV 2S) has passed to South Coast Buses, being used briefly in Lakeland Experience green/cream at Basingstoke but then repainted into Guide Friday colours for use at Eastbourne.

Former ancillary Bristol Lodekka KBD 718D is now a mobile caravan.

Stagecoach Devon ST

Bayline's ex-Bluebird Bristol VRT/SL3 convertible open-toppers 605/8/9 (UWV 605/8/9S) were received in permanent open-top condition, 608 being first into Stagecoach livery, all three carrying Guide Friday colours on arrival.

Stagecoach East London ST

Further new deliveries are of Volvo Olympian/Alexander H51/28D VA135-8/40-8 (R135 EVX etc) and 10.25m Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B30D SLD30-41 (R930-41 FOO).

Acquired dual-door Darts also continue to arrive, with 9.8SDL3054/Plaxton Pointer B37D PD65, 67, 89 (M65, 67 VJO, M89 WBW) and 9.8SDL3035/Plaxton Pointer B37D PD722 (L722 JUD) from Stagecoach Selkent, having only just arrived there from Stagecoach Oxford. Single-door Darts DAL12, 14-16, 22, 23 (N312 AMC etc) to Stagecoach South.

Optare MetroRiders MRL144/8/50 (H144 UUA etc), 160/2/70/1/4 (H160 WWT etc) and Mercedes-Benz 811D StarRiders SR12/3 (F912/3 YWY), 32, 50 (F32, 50 CWY), 56, 60/5/6, 72/3/5/6/8/9 (F156 FWY etc), 105/7/19 (G105 KUB etc) have been withdrawn upon the cessation of the East London Line rail replacement service ELT. However, SR91 (G91 KUB) is reported in allover red.

Stagecoach East Midland ST

A new Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner is reported due as 665. Acquisitions are Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR/Alexander AL H44/30F 262/3 (OCU 819/22R) from Busways, now rather appropriately allocated to Chesterfield (reserve, stored at Stonegravels) and smartly repainted into Stagecoach stripes after receipt here.

All remaining Bristol VRs are now at Mansfield, VRT/SL3/6LXB 209 (EWE 203V) and VRT/SL3/6LXC 218 (KWA 281W) being recently reinstated, as are Leyland Fleetlines 260/1 (UWA 150/1S), also at Mansfield initially 260 to replace VR 203 and 261 allocated from reserve — but both then returned home to Chesterfield later, rather agreeably.

Leyland/Daimler Fleetline open-toppers 113/4 (MBE 613R, BJV 103L) are now back in service at Grimsby-Cleethorpes again, officially ex-reserve.

MCW Metrorider 906 (E51 HFE) has been withdrawn after sustaining accident damage. Leyland National 2 621 (HWJ 621W) has been sold to PVS, Barnsley (dealer), being taken away after being cut into three sections.

Stagecoach Kingston-upon-Hull ST

New Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladin 719-26 (R719-26 RPY) are now delivered — a year behind original schedule, as the original examples due here were drafted away to replace Ribble vehicles lost at Bolton. They are the first new vehicles for Hull not to carry Hull registrations. They have ousted the last MCW Metrobuses, which were 113-9 (SAG 523-9W), 516-21 (SAG 516-21W) and 922 (SAG 522W).

Stagecoach Lancaster ST

Spectacularly-deroofed Leyland Olympian 2203 (J203 HFR) has been sent away for rebuilding. Following this accident, all vehicles (including minibuses) have height warning signs fitted in a more prominent position.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

New Volvo B10M-55s with Plaxton B48F bodywork are 985-96 (R985-96 XVM).

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F R478 GFM and Vario O.810/Plaxton Beaver 2 B29F R252 SDT are on long-term loan from Plaxton to act as float vehicles to cover for Varios from this fleet whilst they have suspension modifications carried out.

Very youthful double-deck acquisitions are Volvo Olympian/Alexander H51/36F 731-43 (R501-13 UWL) from Stagecoach Oxford, in exchange for Volvo B6LE/Alexander Dash from batch 321-32/4 (P321 JND etc) being sent south, 325 being first reported to go.

There is no further news (yet!) of the Kenyan Dennis Dragons — an unusual development if ever.

Leyland Olympian 3049 (B49 PJA) is another downgraded to the low-cost Magic Bus operation. Service 200 (Manchester-Piccadilly-Denton) is now under the Magic Bus banner too.

Leyland Atlantean 4495 (SND 495X) is now with Price, New Broughton.

Stagecoach Midland Red ST

New are Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS 221-8 (R221-8 CRW) at Rugby.

The latest Leyland Atlantean arrival is AN68A/1R/Park Royal H43/32F 993 (BNC 936T) from Western Scottish, which joins ex-Busways AN68A/2R/Alexander 970-2/5-83/5-9 (SCN 252/3/65S, VCU 310T, AVK 175V, EJR 106W, SCN 276/81S, AVK 281V, VCU 304T, AVK 174/68/7/9/40/3/3V), similar 990/1 (MVK 521/58R) via Cheltenham & Gloucester and AN68A/1R/Park Royal 992 (UNA 840S) also from Western. Latest of these to be freshly outshopped in corporate stripework are 990/1 in addition to 977/9/80/5/7/9.

From Oxford come Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess Beaver DP25F 374-6 (E308 BWL, F310/3 EJO), 376 at least being at Banbury still in Thames Transit colours.

An addition for ancillary stock is DAF MB200/Plaxton T9 (ANA 435Y) for driver training, an uncommon choice for this purpose thus far. It retains standard livery.

Leyland Tigers 70 and 76 (BIW 4977, 6253 VC) are used extensively on rail replacement work for Chiltern Railways and so now carry Chiltern Railways white livery and vinyls. Banbury's Leyland National 571 (NOE 571R) still retained poppy red/white/grey in mid-March, Leamington's 504 (JOX 504P) retaining blue and white at end-March, contrary to an earlier report. Leyland National 2 809 (SVV 589W) is now back at Leamington from its holiday with Stagecoach Devon.

Stagecoach Ribble ST

Volvo B10M-62s 1164/5 (M164/5 SCK) now carry Flightlink livery. Three Leyland National 2s new to AA Motor Services have been noted at Bolton, these being FSD 687V, LSD 732W and USJ 491Y, for reasons not clear at present, especially as Ribble vehicle policy is to eliminate the Leyland National. Indeed, four Dennis Javelins surplus from service X43 (due to certain workings that are now double-decked) are now at Bolton as Leyland National 2 replacements!

Now withdrawn are Leyland National 2 370 (HHH 370V), 820/66 (YRN 820V, LFR 866X) and Leyland Leopard 1057 (VFV 7V).

Leyland National 2s 359/98 (KHH 375W, NLS 988W) are now with RoadCar; Iveco 59.12s 714-22 (N188-90 GFR, N463/4 HRN, L448/7/5/6 FFR) are now in service with Devon General; Leyland Leopard 949 (GCK 49W) is now with Green Bus of Great Wyrley; Leyland Tigers 1157/8 (927 GTA, B158 WRN) are now with Bluebird.

Regrettably, yet another main-fleet operator 'heritage' vehicle offered for sale is MCW-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/5 1841 (TCK 841), but only for preservation at least (serious enquirers to write to M. Chambers, Stagecoach Ribble, Frenchwood Avenue, Preston).

Just 13 Bristol VRT/SL3 now remain in service, based at Clitheroe (11) and Blackburn (2). Commendably, 2045/52/6 (FDV 784V, LFJ 883/66W) have recently been freshly painted to keep them smart for further service — apparently there are no plans for imminent withdrawal.

Stagecoach Selkent ST

New Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine H45/23D VN110 (R110 XNO) is now delivered, delayed by a fire at Northern Counties. Also new are 9.4m Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B29F SLD42-49 (R942-9 FOO) at Catford for service P4.

A further Leyland Titan converted from dual-door H44/26D to single-door H44/29F configuration is T1034 (A634 THV). T560, 850/81, 976/99, 1032/76 (NUW 560Y, A850/81 SUL, A976/99 SYE, A632 THV, A76 THX) are now delicensed.

Ex-Oxford Darts PD65, 67, 89 and 722 (M65, 67 VJO, M89 WBW, L722 JUD) have moved on to East London.

Stagecoach South Group ST

Deliveries are of Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F 18, 19, 21-24 (R818 HCD etc) for East Kent and received at Thanet and Volvo B10M-55/Plaxton Paladin B48F 648/9/53/4/74-80 (R648 HCD etc) for Hampshire Bus at Winchester (648/9/54), South Coast Buses at Hastings (653/74/5), East Kent at Dover (676-8), Thanet (679) and Ashford (680). There will be no Dart numbered 20 as matching registration number is not available. The B10Ms have Hanover front indicator displays with nearside and rear numeral repeaters and complete the batch due.

Acquisitions are Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/Alexander Dash B36F 471/84-6 (N311/24-6 AMC) from East London and similar 491/3/6 (N601/3/6 KGF) from Selkent, all unallocated at this time, but 484/5 were delivered to Winchester, 491/3 to Sussex Coastline at Worthing and 496 to South Coast Buses at Eastbourne.

Sussex Coastline Leyland Titan 7207 (OHV 697Y) now has Hanover electronic indicator displays, completing conversion of the second batch of Titans to be allocated to Portsmouth, East Kent's 7247 (NUW 647Y) also being treated. Former East London Darts 484/5 (N324/5 AMC) at Winchester now have indicator displays taken from native Darts 524-40, retained when these were fitted with Bright-Tech units.

East Kent coaches in Express Shuttle livery are now named, Volvo B10M-62s 8404/5 (M404/5 BFG) being *Spirit of Margate* and *Spirit of Sandgate* respectively, B10M-61s 8503/5 (IIL 3503/5) *Spirit of Margate* and *Spirit of Ramsgate*, Scania K93CRB 8856 (J856 NKK) *Spirit of Leeds Castle* and B10M-60 8909 (J909 NKP) another *Spirit of Ramsgate* — it is unusual for more than one vehicle in a fleet to carry the same name. 8404-6 and 8856 are route-branded for service 022 (Ramsgate-London), 8503/5 for Dover-London.

Leyland Titan PD3/4 convertible open-topper 0409 (409 DCD) is now relicensed for the season, AEC Regent V 0946 (MFN 946F) is now relicensed back at Hastings. Bristol VR convertible 7621 (UWV 621S) is now fully repainted in Guide Friday colours including its roof. Good news indeed is that Leyland Titan TD1 0813 (UF 4813) has had its engine reconditioned and it has run on test from Worthing on mid-May under its own power for the first time in many years.

By Pass Driver Training's Wadham Stringer-bodied Dodge C299 BNX has been on loan to Hants & Surrey at Aldershot. Now withdrawn and sold are Hampshire Bus Leyland National 154 (VOD 604S) and Bristol VRT/SL3 7347 (AAP 647T), South Coast Buses Leyland Nationals 155/7 (VOD 605S, UHG 757R), East Kent Bristol VRT/SL3s 690 (EAP 990V) and Leyland National 1181 (NFN 81R), all passing to Hardwick, Carlton, 157, 690 and 1181 in a cannibalised condition.

Stagecoach Swindon & District ST

Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B52F 377/8 (RHG 880X, NHH 382W) are now in stock ex-Cheltenham & Gloucester, Volvo B6/Alexander B40F 845 (M845 EMW) from Cheltenham District. Recent Volvo B6LEs 853/4 (P853/4 SMR) have been drafted to Cheltenham & Gloucester to meet a pressing need for low-floor saloons there (qv).

Stagecoach United Counties ST

New dual-purpose Volvo Olympian 559 (R703 DNH) is re-registered WLT 528, previously carried by Leyland Olympian 612. Olympians 559-68 are replacing vehicles at Bedford.

The Bristol VRT does hang on in Northampton — just — with 734/5 and 935 (FDV 812V, LFJ 964W, SNV 935W) allocated, joined by reinstated 849/63 (OVV 849R, RRP 863R) which are awaiting sale, are used mainly on contract work and carry no destination blinds.

Stagecoach Viscount ST

New are Volvo Olympian/Alexander 580-6 (R580-6 VJA) at Peterborough, the arrival of which has seen the departure of Northern Counties-bodied Olympians 578/9 (P578-9 EFL) to Cambus at Cambridge. Also transferred to Cambus from Peterborough are Optare MetroRiders 985/90 (K974 HUB, M810 WWR), replacements taken into stock here being former Millers Leyland Lynx 311/2 (F168/71 SMT). Another Bristol VRT/SL3 freshly outshopped into corporate stripework is late model 790 (VAH 280X).

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — FirstGroup
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Stephenson, Rochford

Dealer stock ex-Northern Bus Bristol VRT/SL3 VHB 678S was in use for just two days at the Southend Air Show in May in open-top form (still in full Northern Bus livery) for tours of visiting aircraft on the airport apron, along with ex-Southend Leyland Atlantean open-topper MPJ 210L, still in pristine Arriva livery (being the first vehicle sold in this scheme). VHB was later repainted cream with black window surrounds prior to an appearance at the Southend Bus Rally in June. The lone 'service fleet' open-topper, VRT/SL3 MBZ 7140 was also on the circuit as the seafront service was abandoned on the two days; it is still in its traditional Southend allover cream livery, pending application of an overall advertisement scheme shortly.

Timeline, Leigh

Leyland Atlanteans 122/5 (RFR 418P, SFV 425P) have passed to York Pullman, Elvington.

Traditional Motor Bus Co, Isle of Wight

It is a pleasure to record this new operator, which now runs the Southern Vectis Shanklin's Pony service 44.

Transferred from Southern Vectis to TMB are Bristol RELL6G/ECW OB53F 864 (TDL 564K), retaining Shanklin's Pony livery and now renumbered 2 and named *Muffin*. Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW CO43/31F 503 (VDL 613S, *473 CDL*, *UFX 855S*) is numbered 3, freshly painted in Shanklin's Pony livery and named *Eeyore*, whilst sister 504 (UFX 856S) retains Southern Vectis livery at present and is also not named, but is numbered 4, both these converted to open-top condition for the summer.

A vehicle acquired, also with previous Island connections is former Seaview Services Bedford YRQ/Plaxton Derwent V49F VDL 264K, now numbered 1 and currently placed into store still in East Surrey orange/cream livery, but bought via Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green (dealer).

Travel Merry Hill NX

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of Leyland Nationals 102/4/5/19/20 (CBV 785S, UHG 734R, NTC 623M, BVP 773/61V) from Smiths, MCW Metroriders 669/8- (F669/80 YOG) and Leyland Fleetline 6898 (TVP 898S) from West Midlands, with Northern Counties 176-80 (KDZ 5801-5) to Smiths, Metrorider 641 (D641 NOE) moving to West Midlands and store, Leyland Fleetline 6898 (TVP 898S) also to WM and later to store.

Dennis Darts KDZ 5801-5 are now numbered as 801-5. All Leyland Nationals and Darts are now in full Travel Merry Hill livery.

Freight Rover Sherpa 147 (G263 GKG) has been withdrawn and sold, the last Sherpa, 110 (E514 TOV) having been withdrawn from the Walsall-based Reserve Fleet.

Travel West Midlands NX

A fleet of 305 low-floor vehicles is now in the course of delivery for West Midlands, Your Bus, Merry Hill and Travel London. Due here are 105 Wright-bodied Volvo B6LEs, 100 Mercedes-Benz 0.405N with Mercedes-Benz body shells, the first 10 finished by UVG and the rest by Mercedes-Benz, 45 Optare Solos, 35 Optare Excels and 20 DAF DB250LF/Optare Spectras.

The pioneer low-floor Spectra is reported at work on new 'low-floor' services 9, 109 and 139 which were launched in February and for which Scania L113s 1398/9 and Volvo B10Ls 1443-67 are route-branded.

Further new vehicles are Mercedes-Benz O.405/B43F 1518-22 (R518-22 XOB), as mentioned above, whilst the next B6LEs have registrations R582-99, 160, 601-4, 905, 606-27, 928, 629-31 YON reserved for them.

An acquisition to note is Volvo-engined Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F 1731 (VNO 731S) from storage at Bournemouth Airport and placed in store here. Also in store are Metroriders 639/62/74, MCW Metrobuses 2008/15/25/47/77/88, 2101/17/37/ 46/55, 2200/10/1/7/87, 2345/53/62/3/85, 2407/9/28 and Leyland Lynx 9062. Metroriders 669/80 (F669/80 YOG), Leyland Fleetline 6898 (TVP 898S) and Volvo B10M/Plaxton 8005 (K657 BOH, *K5 CEN*) have all gone to Merry Hill, the Fleetline quickly returning, into storage, here. MCW Metrobus 2426 (LOA 426X) has not been sold as expected and so remains in stock.

Exhibited at the Brighton Coach Rally, but seen here in its home town, Blackpool, is Seagull Coaches R927 TFR, a Marco Polo-bodied Dennis Javelin.
PAUL WIGAN

New in the Glyn Williams fleet is R408 AOR, one of the first Dennis Dart SLFs delivered with SCUK (formerly UVG) bodywork, since the Caetano take-over earlier this year.
PAUL CHANCELLOR

Leyland National 2 1025 (DOC 25V) is now re-registered OIL 8490 prior to sale. Metrorider 685 (F685 YOG) has gone for preservation with the Aston Manor Transport Museum in Birmingham (thought the first Metrorider in preservation); the type is now extinct here apart from ancillary 620 (D620 NOE); 617/66/71 (D617 NOE, F666/71 YOG) have gone to Wacton, Bromyard (dealer) for export, 624 (D634 NOE) sold to unconfirmed buyer, 629/41/64 (D629/41 NOE, E664 RVP) to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap and 683 (F683 YOG) to Headlight of Royston; Leyland Nationals 1010/3-5 and 1806 (AOL 10, 13-15T, OOX 806R) to Ambermile of Honley, 1035/9 (DOC 35, 39V) to Bournemouth Airport, Hurn, 1049/51 and 1745 (DOC 49, 51V, PTF 745L) to K-Line, Leeds. Daimler Fleetline 1956 (WDA 956T) has gone to new preservation owners, open-topper 4069 (YOX 69K) has passed to private owners, Leyland Fleetlines 6689 and 6968 (WDA 689, 968T) to Lunt of Olney and 6967 (WDA 967T) to BT Group Motor Transport, but 6954/5 (WDA 954/5T) and Metrobuses 2147/65 (GOG 147/65W), 2221 (GOG 221W), 2375 (LOA 375X) and 2415/9 (LOA 415/9X) have gone to Whiting, Pontefract (dealer) for scrap.

Travel Your Bus NX

MCW Metrobus 2927 (D927 NDA) is newly outshopped in the new low-floor style livery.

Trent Buses

Further Leyland Nationals returned to service are 442/54/71/95 (PRR 442/54R, URB 471S, XAL 495S), sister 441 (PRR 441R) also doing so, but in ancillary capacity as a staff bus at Sutton Junction.

Leyland Nationals 417/8 (OHW 492R, FBV 525S) are now renumbered 549/50 respectively.

Leyland Nationals 505-14 (ACH 505-14T) and Leyland Olympians 712/5 (B712/5 HVO) are now transferred to a separate unit based at Trent's Meadow Road depot, carrying an apple green/blue livery with 'Blue Apple' fleetnames (and Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Traction Co Ltd legal lettering). Additionally, Leyland Nationals 569/70 (JHJ 139/46V) now carry Barton fleetnames in place of Trent Buses, similar 530/1 (FRA 530/1V) being repainted into two-tone blue and yellow livery and transferred to sister company Kinchbus of Barrow-upon-Soar.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 284 (R284 LNU) has already lost its short-lived Barton livery, gaining Hilton Flyer livery instead for a new service from Derby to Hilton. MAN/Optare Vectas 801-4 (M801-4 PRA) and Vario/Plaxtons 276/7 (R276/7 RAU) now carry route-branding for the 'Villager' network of services between Derby and Burton-on-Trent.

Vehicles withdrawn are Leyland Nationals 446/87 (RTO 464R, XAL 487S), Leyland Olympians 714/22 (B714 HVO, C722 NNN) and Leyland National staff bus 433 (KVO 433P).

Leyland National 494 (XAL 494S) is now sold to Marshalls of Sutton-on-Trent, Olympians 714/22 (B714 HVO, C722 NNN) to Ipswich Buses, Plaxton-bodied DAF coaches 1639/40 (D639/40 WNU) to Mayne of Manchester. The cannibalised hulks of Leyland Nationals 447/74 (PRR 447R, VCH 474S) have passed to Looms of Spondon, Derby.

Universitybus, Hatfield

Dennis Super Pointer Dart demonstrator R739 TMO has been on loan and in service here.

Leyland National OOX 816R is now at work with Cave's of Shirley, still carrying its mauve livery. Leyland Tiger HIL 6246 has been sold to a dealer.

Warrington Borough Transport

Ten new Optare MetroRiders are reported on order for delivery this year in two batches.

Meanwhile, withdrawn Leyland Atlanteans 5-9 and 11 (XTB 5T etc) have been sold to Alpine of Llandudno, 10 (XTB 10T) to Fraser of Munlochy, 118/9/23/5/6 (CBV 118/9/23S, LFR 125/6T) to Thomas of Porth whilst 53-55 and 60 (LJA 473/80/4P, YNA 307M) have finished their days with Wigley, Carlton (dealer) recently, ex-Walls of Sharston.

Many Atlanteans have been withdrawn as a result of the loss of Cheshire CC school contracts, but 12 and 14-17 (GEK 12, 14-16V, HED 17V) are being retained as a reserve fleet.

Yorkshire Traction YT

Rebodied Scania saloon 204 (D85 ALX) has been delivered to Huddersfield, but returned to East Lancs for modifications prior to use at Doncaster, re-registered as 3141 HE.

Mercedes-Benz O.405 demonstrator R280 SDT has been on trial at Barnsley.

Zaks, Birmingham

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 R690 YOM is at work here.

ISLE OF MAN

Readers wishing to keep in touch with latest developments — and historical perspectives — on all forms of public transport in (and to) the Isle of Man are warmly recommended to the Manx Electric Railway Society's *Manx Transport Review*, which is kindly made available to Fleet News. This covers bus, coach, preservation and sold stock in great detail, as well as railway and tramway operations, together with air and sea operations — all in fine detail. Copiously illustrated and printed on quality paper, the *Review* provides an extremely detailed, informative and readable account. The latest edition of this handy A5-sized publication, for Spring 1998, totalled 105 pages and is to a very high standard. For details, please send an SAE to Subscriptions, Manx Electric Railway Society, PO Box 117, Douglas, Isle of Man IM99 1JS.

Former Merthyr Tydfil 1968 Leyland Leopard EHB 259G is now in use for the transport of film crews under a Department of Industry initiative and is re-registered DMN 225R here.

Department of Tourism & Leisure

Early ex-Southdown Leyland National BCD 802L has been used as a courtesy vehicle at Ronaldsway Airport for some time, but has now passed to a dealer at Ballaugh.

Douglas Corporation Transport

AEC Regent V 8123 MN has recently been on tour again and it is thought it may regain its original roof soon.

Isle of Man Transport

New 'Easyrider' Marshall Capital-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 16-40 (DMN 16-40R) are on lease to IoMT. The vehicles have spent some time in store but are now employed on the existing network of services, although initially allocated to Manx Express services until their limited capacity of only 37 became a problem, Leyland Lynxes being employed in such cases. Following problems with drivers' access to change indicator displays, brand new Darts 16, 18, 19, 21 have now received complete units from withdrawn Leyland Nationals, some others being modified with offside numeral displays so that they may be reached from the higher floor level of the cab.

The first ex-Halton Lynx in service was 89 (MAN 89F) from Douglas depot, joined by 90 (MAN 90F) soon after, both operating in Halton livery initially, 89 complete with Widnes rear advertising! Next into service were 92 (MAN 92F) in Halton colours, freshly painted 93 (MAN 93F), 91 (MAN 91F) also in Halton red and then 94 (MAN 94F) in a new IoMT Lynx livery, applied in a similar layout to Halton's, but with a cream stripe above the windows. Black fleetnames appear on red background and this is now standard for the type, such that native 2 (BMN 402T) now carries it. Sister 1 (BMN 401T) is also now repainted and happily retains Isle of Man Road Services commemorative livery, which it has worn since 1990. Not to be out-done by the Darts, Lynx 91 — still in original identity as Halton F520 AEM — was initially placed in storage actually upon the steam railway track itself!

Further Leyland Lynxes from Halton Transport are now expected following successful operation of the first six. Three (or possibly five) are expected, probable candidates being Halton's senior remaining G222 DKA, G473/4 DHF, G803 EKA and H542 FWM. Fleetnumbers 95-97 at least are thought reserved for the first of these.

Closed-circuit TV has had to be installed at Ramsey depot, after an incident where youths caused Olympian 69 to roll into the back of the depot overnight; although damage to the bus was relatively little, the wall has required more drastic surgery, a similar incident some time ago claiming ex-South Yorkshire Leyland National 3 (2703 MAN) back in 1989. Meanwhile, 1988 Leyland Olympian 87 (BMN 87G) is now back in service, having spent just over two *years* out of service following its accident.

Larger fleetnumbers are now being applied to vehicles at repaint, being a noticeable improvement on the rather miniscule numbers used of late.

At long last, the days of the Leyland National have now ended on the Isle of Man; not previously recorded was the fact that all remaining Leyland Nationals as at 1 April last year were officially renumbered with 100 being added to their existing fleetnumbers, to avoid clashing with the SLFs. None carried these new fleetnumbers however. 28 (MAN 28N) was withdrawn following mechanical failure in service, the bus being unceremoniously towed to Ronaldsway Airport for storage, joining sisters 20, 27 and 31 (MAN 20D, MAN 27, 31N). 32 (MAN 32N) was next to go, followed by 25 (MAN 25H) and then Douglas Corporation-liveried 29 (MAN 29N), leaving 30 (MAN 30N) as the final Leyland National to operate before this and, 25, 27, 28 and 32 joined the others at Ronaldsway. A farewell tour was operated using 30 on its last day, before it replaced a Dart on the 23 (Onchan circular); it was unexpectedly brought out a few days later for one last duty, as a courtesy vehicle for walkers from Peel to Douglas in connection with the Steam 125 event. 30 is now in use with the Department of Education, as a 'Computer Bus' (visit it on the Web at www.computerbus.com). 27 has suffered considerable damage at the hands of local vandals, to the chagrin of those hoping to see this historically significant vehicle preserved — it was the last vehicle delivered to the privately owned IoMRS, back in April 1976. Meanwhile, 18 (MAN 18D) is now dubbed *Beryl's Bus* as a non-mobile Youth Club at Ramsey, having been repainted by students of Homefield College. 26 (MAN 26H) is now a rather rusty waiting room for the Manx Electric Railway at Derby Castle.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Particular thanks are due, this month, to the following for your most welcome contributions to Fleet News: Airbus, *Anglian Review*, Matthew J. Arnold, Bill Ashcroft, Andrew Babbs, Andrew Bagshaw, Eric Baldock, Chris Barker, Harry L. Barker, Andrew Bartlett, Jason Beverley, Michael Bewes, Kenneth N. Bladon, Simon Blake, M. L. R. Bott, Stephen Briggs, Bristol Interest Circle, *Bristol Passenger*, British Bus Publishing, British Trolleybus Society, J. Bultena, The Bus Club Ltd, *Bus Fare*, The Cambridge Omnibus Society, *Cambus*, Roger Carey, D. J. Carter, The Channel Islands Bus Society, Andrew P. Churchill, *Cleveland Transit News*, R. N. Collins, Harry W. Cooke, Matt Cooper, Tony Coram, Chris Corroy, County Bus & Coach, Paul Crate, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Gareth Crowther, Cumbria Transport Society, Cygnet of Barnsley, Devon General Society, Nigel Diplock, James Dunkley, Eastern Transport Collection, David Enticott, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, Ian Francis, Greater Manchester Transport Society, Guide Friday, Peter Guppy, Toby Hart, A. D. Healey, Norman Hill, Marc Morgan Huws, Chris Jeavons, Neil Jessop, D. Johnson, Steven Knight, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, Leicester Citybus, Byron Lewis, Gary Llewellyn, *Lincolnshire & East Yorkshire Transport Review*, W. R. Livesey, London Central, London Omnibus Traction Society, Christopher J. Lowe, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, David Mallon, Manx Electric Railway Society, *Manx Transport Review*, Merseyside Bus Club, Metroline, Midland Counties PSV Society, Midland Red North, G. R. Mills, Ian J. Moorcroft, Paul Morrey, Peter Mudel, G. C. Nelson, Billy Nichol, Simon Nicholas, North Birmingham Busways, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, *North Essex PSV News*, Northumbria Enthusiasts Club, Oxford, Deric Pemberton, James Penton, People's Provincial, A. M. Phillips, Timothy Phillips, John R. D. Podgorski, Bill Potter, Steve Powell, Jonathan Radley, Ribble Enthusiasts Club, S. G. Richards, Road Car, Mike Robins, Tony Robinson, Dave Russell, M. J. Saltmarsh, Steve Sanderson, Ken Savage, Phil Shafe, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, A. C. Small, B. Smith, Mark A. Smith, R. G. Smith, Solent Omnibus Club, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Southern Vectis, Eric Speckman, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiast Group, *Stage Carriage*, David J. Stanier, Phil Stockley, Swindon Vintage Omnibus Society, Colin Swinson, Daniel Tancock, *TBC News*, *Terminus*, *The Enthusiast*, Dave B. Thomas, Nick Thomson, Peter Ticehurst, Richard Todd, Transpire The Chesterfield Bus Society, Travel West Midlands, Allen Trenchard, Trent Buses, *Ultimate*, United Counties, United Enthusiasts Club, D. E. Wall, Philip R. Wallis, D. S. Ward, R. M. Warwick, J. Watson, *The Waybill*, Michael P. Webster, *Wessex bi-monthly REVIEW*, The Wessex Transport Society, West Yorkshire Information Service, *West Yorkshire Metro Transport News*, *Wheels*, D. C. Wilder, Trystan Williams, Eric Wilson, Wilts & Dorset, Dr J. R. Young, John K. Young.

Correspondents are thanked for sending me an unusually large amount of material over recent weeks; consequently, to accommodate as much as possible, some detailed material is included for smaller operators this month in some areas, which will be balanced by other areas' enjoying greater coverage next month. Many thanks to all correspondents for your most welcome contributions.

Regular Fleet News correspondent Geoff Nelson is wished well for his convalescence — thanks indeed go to all the regular and thereby most loyal supporters who are the mainstay of this feature.

Tours, Isle of Man

An acquisition is Cummins-engined Bedford YMP/Plaxton C35F D813 SHE (*A2 WHO*, *D813 SHE*) from Wray of Harrogate, intriguingly badged as a Volvo B6! It is now no 4 (MAN 111P). The first DAF-engined LAG Panoramic is 3 (BMN 111, *F768 XNH*), C51Ft, ex-Clay Lake of Harlesden. Bedford 51 (MAN 111J) is now renumbered 53 to make way for it.Bedford PJK/Duple 28 (BMN 111A) is rebuilt and back in service.

The last coach retaining Western Tours green/white livery, Bedford YRT/Duple MAN 2033, has been withdrawn, as has YRQ/Duple 46 (MAN 4777) after a period out of use with mechanical failure. Duple-bodied ex-Western Tours Leyland Leopard 58 (CMN 545C, *ANA 27*) is also now withdrawn and is stored, so the last ex-Western Tours vehicle left in service is YRQS 35 (CMN 920V), with three others held in store.

Having been collecting them recently, Arriva London & Country is now getting rid of Dennis Dominators. East Lancs-bodied DD6 (F606 RPG) is now Thamesdown No77.
PHILIP WALLIS

Switch is an appropriate term to describe the events surrounding the arrival of this ex-Stagecoach Oxford Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian with Stagecoach Manchester, where it has become 737. After a very short career in Oxford, the batch of 13 has been swapped for Alexander-bodied Volvo B6LEs.
JOHN YOUNG

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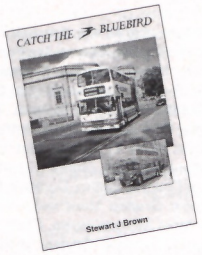

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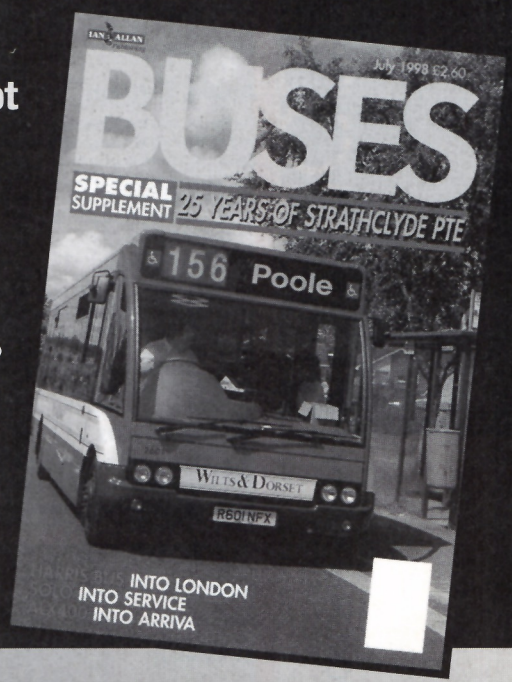

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Reports to be sent, please, to Sandy Macdonald, **12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow G41 4AF**, to reach him by **20 August** for the **September** issue.

Aberfeldy Motors

Plaxton-bodied Volvo coaches G72 RGG, PDZ 4203 (*G80 RGG*), and L299 KKW which all joined the fleet last year, had gone to Kirkby (dealer), Anston by March.

Arriva Scotland West AA

An addition to this fleet in June, either acquired or on loan, was Park Royal H44/24D-bodied Leyland Titan TNLXB2RRSp CUL 95V, previously in the Leaside Buses fleet. It entered service from Inchinnan depot still in full Leaside livery.

Wright Urbanranger-bodied Mercedes-Benz OH1416 1001 has been repainted into the white and blue livery for the Scottish Citylink Glasgow-Glasgow Airport service, and is presumably to be used as an additional back-up vehicle for this contract.

Austin, Earlston

Further to the report in the June issue, the Plaxton-bodied DAF coach acquired last November ex-Edwards, Whitland was registered NKH 819 and not NKH 319 as reported. Kässbohrer Setra S215HR C53F integral F488 YSC (*PSU 619*) passed to Gale, Haslemere in February.

Ayrliners, Ayr

Two of the vehicles in this fleet, which has adopted a white, red and blue livery, are Duple C50Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 NIL 8661 (*TOS 837X, FSU 739, GGE 128X*) ex-Milligan, Mauchline but earlier with Western Scottish, and Carlyle B20F-bodied Freight Rover Sherpa F211 AKG.

Bluebird Buses ST

Duple C57F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 554 has been re-registered from F277 WAF to 145 CLT.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 016 (TSO 16X) was returned to this fleet in May having been used by Brian Souter for his own purposes since earlier this year.

Bowman, Craignure

Duple-bodied Bedford YMT coaches TMA 254V and RGD 383W both passed to Clynnog & Trefor, Trefor last November.

Carlton, Glasgow

Having given up the initial local service operation tried in the Clydebank area only in April, this operator registered a new service from 22 June. Service 164 is to run hourly between Glasgow Cross or Partick Bus Station and Old Kilpatrick, competing with FirstGroup services throughout its length.

Cityliner, Port Glasgow

Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10M-60 G453 VSL was re-registered WJI 5868 in March.

Citylink NX

The service between Inverness and Urquhart Castle is now being provided by this company as service 912 and operated on behalf of Citylink by Highland Country; this was previously a Highland Bus & Coach summer service.

Clyde Coast, Ardrossan

R184 VSJ is a Volvo B10M-62 with Van Hool coachwork which was new in May.

Collison, Stonehouse

R1 BUS is a new Bova FHD12.340 with C51F coachwork which was delivered in April. G113 STT is a B16F Talbot Pullman acquired in April ex-Myles, Plean while other buses purchased at that time comprise Wadham Stringer DP35FL-bodied Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RAs F136/8/9 UMD, previously London Borough of Haringey 9841/4/2. Reeve Burgess-bodied Leyland Swift H533 MCC was re-registered UMB 985 in April.

Crawford, Kirkintilloch

The first news of this smart fleet for some time concerns the purchase in July 1997 of E688 UNE, a Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ with Plaxton C53F coachwork ex-Cottrell, Mitcheldean and its immediate re-registration to 3935 AC. Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D M3 (H841 UUA) was re-registered 1707 AC in October

Crawford, Neilston

With the sale of the Ardrossan/Glasgow service to Western Buses in April, Van Hool C57F-bodied Scania K113CRB L266 VUS also passed to that company at that time, but may not be used by its new owners. Another former stalwart on this service, Alexander CH47/35F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 F254 OFP, passed to Cherry, Bootle last year.

Cumbrae, Millport

R11 WAL, an Ikarus Citybus B49F-bodied DAF SB220 previously owned by Walls, Manchester, has been added to this fleet and is now in full red and black fleet livery. Leyland National EMB 362S passed to Northern Bus, Anston some time ago.

Dickson, Erskine

L261 VSU is a Mercedes-Benz 609D with Onyx C24F coachwork acquired in April ex-Brotherton, Rachub. Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D E456 VUM was previously registered *38393, E456 VUM.*

This company was caught on Paisley's closed-circuit television network repeatedly waiting at stops where only picking up and setting down was allowed. In April the Traffic Commissioner banned this firm for a period of eight weeks from using stops within the prescribed area of the centre of Paisley where bus waiting and loading is controlled by a Traffic Regulation Condition.

Docherty, Irvine

Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.814 P878 MSD was re-registered ED 3417 last October. Caetano C38Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-46 E979 KJF (*WIA 20, E979 KJF*) passed to Keir, Kemnay in April.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

F69 LNU is a Mercedes-Benz 709D with Robin Hood B29F bodywork acquired earlier this year ex-Hayball, Warminster.

First Aberdeen FG

Loaned Van Hool-bodied Scania tri-axle coach K24 GVC has been allocated the 'loaned vehicle' fleetnumber 028.

The repainting of the Optare Prismas into allover white for park-&-ride work continues with 516-9 having been completed by early June and 520 being treated at that time. Their final livery is to be white, red, and blue with a revised logo which will emphasise 'Park and Ride' rather than 'City Quick' to ensure that potential customers do not mistake them for normal service buses.

Leyland Olympian 131, the only double-deck bus to have an electronic destination display, has lost it in favour of conventional Day-Glo blinds albeit operated at the push of a button as an experiment. Dennis Dart SLF 208 has had its electronic welcoming voice removed after only a couple of weeks' use as drivers found the constant 'Welcome to Gold Service' message irritating. The problem with the destination blinds on these buses has been solved; the plans to purchase step ladders was cancelled when it was realised that the handle could be repositioned to the cab side within reach of the driver. However, in the process of conversion at least one (218) lost its purpose-built destination blind and gained an ill-fitting one from a redundant Atlantean which does not include Beechgrove; this bus is regularly used on service 7 to Beechgrove and now has to carry a Day-Glo board with this destination on it.

Despite the Gold Service charter which promises that only the 'highest specification' vehicles will be used on such services, ageing double-deck buses have been transferred to Gold Service work in significant numbers to allow Dennis Darts and Mercedes-Benz O.405s to be used on contract and private hire business. First, the older Olympians 101-10 were being used irrespective of livery and whether or not they were upgraded under the short-lived refurbishment programme of 1993, and then from mid-May Atlanteans reappeared on services 1-4 for peak time operation. Double-deck buses are now being used on Gold Services 1-4, 5, 11, and 16 and are even being used on evening services while the Darts and O.405s are used on non-Gold Service routes.

On 31 May the Granite City Circular Tour was reintroduced on a reduced frequency and operated by just two buses (019/20) but a third vehicle was to be used from July.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 434 (H34 USO) was transferred to the Kirkpatrick, Banchory fleet in May. Leyland Atlantean 267 (HRS 267V) was returned by First Midland Bluebird in June after a brief spell on loan, but its place was taken by similar, Hydrasun-liveried, 287 (HSO 287V) which may have been sold to First Midland Bluebird.

First Glasgow FG

Despite the decision not to use the First Kelvin name, it has been reported that Volvo B10BLEs SV564-73 were given First Kelvin fleetnames and that Volvo Olympian VO40 was repainted into allover red with similar branding. It is unlikely, however, that this will be repeated, in view of the fact that from 29 May Strathclyde Buses Ltd and Kelvin Central Buses Ltd were officially renamed First Glasgow (No1) Ltd and First Glasgow (No2) Ltd respectively! From the same date SB Holdings Ltd was renamed First Glasgow Ltd.

The latest crop of repaints reported comprise Ailsas A45, 51, 111; Leyland Olympians LO17, 41, 124; Leyland Tigers ST354/62; MCW Metrobus DM150; Volvo B10M SV406/57/63; and Volvo Citybuses AH12/4 now in allover red, while Dennis Darts MD62, 74/8, 86, 95; Scania L113CRLs SS14-6, 21/4/7, 38; and Volvo Olympians VO110/7/9/20/44-7/56/7/9 are in the pastel livery. SV406 had been in orange, white and black coach livery.

Volvo B6LE MV33 is another example of its type to be given Superbus fleetnames, for use on service X19 from Parkhead depot, while similar MV38, 40/2 have lost theirs. At Knightswood depot, Volvo B10Ms SV415/6 have gained Superbus fleetnames.

The seating capacity of the Wright-bodied Scanias in this fleet has caused some confusion since their entry into service. While they have been recorded here as B43F, the PSV Circle has recorded them as both B40F and B41F since the front rearward facing seat is wider than a normal single seat, but has now decided that they should be B40F.

With reference to the February issue, several Dennis Darts have ended up with different registrations from those previously quoted. Those concerned are MD45/6, 61-4/6 which are P890/89 TCV, R636-8/64 DUS, R757 DYS and not as previously quoted.

Various re-registrations effected earlier this year can be reported, comprising Leyland Tigers CT1 (WLT 760, *BSG 548W*) to BSG 548W before sale to Wigley, CT10 (WLT 741, *PGE 442Y, WLT 741, TFS 319Y*) to JSB 36Y, CT12 (WLT 408, *TFS 321Y*) to TFS 321Y, CT15 (KCB 758, *A104 EPA*) to A104 EPA, CT30 (C257 SPC) to WLT 760, CT32 (WLT 678, *A128 ESG*) to A128 ESG, and Volvo Olympians CO245 (M845 DUS) to WLT 770, VO43 (M843 DUS) to WLT 976. Alexander-

New to Arriva Scotland West is 330 (R130 GNM), an Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario, seen on the Glasgow City Rail Link. BILLY NICOL

SANDY MACDONALD

SCHOOL BUS CONTRACTOR WITHOUT O-LICENCE

The Western Isles Council was criticised by the Scottish Traffic Commissioner Michael Betts at a Public Inquiry in May for awarding a school bus contract to a Harris operator who ran without an O-licence for 21 months. The Council was accused by Mr Betts of being economical with the truth over the matter, and invited to consider whether internal disciplinary action was warranted.

John Morrison, trading as Morrison Coaches, of Cleur had applied for a national licence to run two vehicles. The Inquiry was also to consider whether disciplinary action should be taken against the licences held by other Lewis/Harris operators involved comprising Angus Morrison of West Tarbert, Alasdair MacLennan of Laxay, and Margaret MacKay trading as Dalbeg Coaches.

Morrison Coaches was awarded a school contract by the Council in 1996 and borrowed an O-licence disc from Angus Morrison. The service was to be registered and the Council helped complete the relevant form, supplying a letter of support which incorrectly stated that the contract had been awarded to Angus Morrison.The latter soon became aware that he should not have loaned the disc to John Morrison and took it back. John Morrison then borrowed a disc from MacLennan, but this did not last long either. Mrs MacKay then assisted by having the contract 'assigned' to her with the agreement of the Council. But she should then have been responsible for the drivers' wages (including John Morrison) and the maintenance of the vehicles.

The Council thought that John Morrison would get his licence quickly, but unfortunately the situation had gone on for 21 months. In its conditions of contract the onus was on the operator to have the necessary licences and insurance. Mr Betts could not, however, see any justification at all for the Council knowingly letting a contract for the conveyance of schoolchildren to someone who did not hold the statutory licence, and he considered that the withholding from his staff of the true story in terms of the registration to have been economical with the truth.

Given that the three operators and the aspiring operator should all have known the rules, whatever the Council had condoned, Mr Betts refused John Morrison's application and stated that he would not consider a fresh application for three months; he suspended two vehicles from the six authorised on MacLennan's licence for three months; and suspended one vehicle from the two authorised on MacKay's licence for four months. No action was taken against Angus Morrison.

Following the Inquiry, a transport official was suspended from duty by Western Isles Council pending investigations.

GREENWAYS SUCCESS STORY

After the first six months of operation, the two Greenways bus priority schemes introduced last August by Edinburgh City Council from Leith and Maybury to the city centre have been judged to be a success.

The main bus operator affected, Lothian Region Transport, revealed in April that the average journey time on the Leith route had been cut by 25%, and by 10% on the peak hours-only route through Corstorphine towards Maybury. An extra 108,500 journeys had been made on the former route and an extra 141,500 on the latter. From a commercial confidentiality point of view, the company would not reveal what percentage increase these figures represented. Based on the average car carrying 1.2 passengers, the increase in bus passengers was estimated to be the equivalent of more than 200,000 car journeys; this assumed that the extra trips would have been made by car but does suggest that during the period concerned the Greenways were achieving their aim of easing growing traffic chaos.

These figures would help to justify the Council's expenditure on the schemes together with the company's £8million investment in low-emission vehicles which have been used on the routes. They will also have boosted LRT's income, while the enhanced service reliability which has been brought about has allowed the company to make savings by reducing stand-by staff by up to three-quarters. As a result of these benefits, more limited stop express buses were introduced on the Corstorphine corridor from 5 May, and particulate traps are now to be fitted to all buses on Greenways routes to reduce pollution further.

The City Council intends to introduce a further three Greenway schemes in October this year on Gorgie Road between the city centre and Wester Hailes, Slateford Road, and on Lothian Road to Tollcross. Local Community Councils are, however, opposed to a possible extension of the Tollcross one to Morningside, fearing an adverse impact on the trade of local shops which depend to some extent on an element of passing trade. Good local shopping is seen as an integral part of the quality of life in a local community, and Greenways in Morningside Road and Bruntsfield Place are therefore not wanted by these groups which are taking a community-based rather than a traffic-based attitude to the matter.

bodied Leyland Atlantean LA1446 was re-registered from CUS 300X to TOS 968X in May, its original mark now being on a private car. Dual-purpose MCW Metrobuses MBC62-6 were officially renumbered MB62-6 in May.

Vehicles listed by the company in June as being scrapped comprised Alexander-bodied Ailsa A18 (CSU 226X); Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian LO8 (CGG 831X); ECW-bodied Olympian LO27 (KGG 147Y); Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger CT202 (FGG 602X); and MCW-bodied Metrobuses MB25 (KGG 166Y), MB33 (MUS 311Y).

CT32, a Duple Laser C55F-bodied Tiger TRCTL11/3RH, was transferred to sister company Western National in June. It has now been confirmed that Leyland Atlanteans LA539 (CWG 720V) with Alexander bodywork and LA549 (WAG 379X) with Roe bodywork were sold to First Midland Bluebird in April. It has also been confirmed that Alexander-bodied Atlantean LA1448 (CUS 302X) has been sold to Roulston, Glasgow for preservation in lieu of LA1449.

First Lowland FG

1315 (R315 LKS) is the final Alexander Royale H42/29F-bodied Volvo Olympian of the current batch to enter service, which it did in June from Dalkeith depot. Similar 1314 (R314 LKS) was transferred to this company from First Midland Bluebird about that time and is also in use from Dalkeith, but neither of these buses has carried fleetnames since delivery.

Leyland Olympian 929 has been repainted into First Lowland livery.

This company supported National Green Transport Week in June by offering various fare deals on a number of routes.

First Midland Bluebird FG

As part of the Stirling Council initiative on the use of alternative fuel buses in Stirling, highlighted in the April 1997 issue, Plaxton-bodied DAF LPG bus P10 LPG was on loan at Bannockburn depot at the end of May and was expected to move to Mackie, Alloa thereafter.

Further to last month's issue, a report has been received that Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympian 1315 (R315 LKS) did not enter service with this company in February as previously stated, but in fact only arrived in early June and first entered service with First Lowland rather than this company. The fact that it did not enter service in February seems to be correct as an official fleetlist dated 26 March shows that it was first registered on 13 March, and was allocated to Larbert depot at that time. What is certain is that this bus, together with similar 1314 (R314 LKS) which was also first registered on 13 March, was transferred to First Lowland around the beginning of June.

Left: **McKindlass, Wishall has acquired an assortment of Leyland Nationals recently. Former Bristol Omnibus KHT 121P is seen here, passing through Motherwell.** PHILIP WALLIS

Below left: **Former Southdown 611, now with Bluebird Buses was given this livery, sponsored by Stagecoach, so that it could act as an Information Centre for Scotland fans in France during the World Cup.** BILLY NICOL

As reported above, Alexander-bodied Leylantean HRS 267V was on loan to this company from First Aberdeen (its fleetnumber 267) around May but was replaced the following month by similar 287 (HSO 287V) and it is possible that this vehicle will remain with this company. It has now been confirmed that Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean 758 (CWG 720V) and Roe-bodied Atlantean 759 (WAG 379X) were officially transferred to this company from First Glasgow in April.

Other recent arrivals include 191 (A661 KUM), a Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2R with Duple Dominant DP47F body ex-Yorkshire Rider 1661; 197 (F38 ENF), a Leyland Tiger TRBL10/3ARZA with rare Alexander N type B55F bodywork previously Leicester Citybus 402; similar G53 RND ex-Leicester Citybus 403 but no new fleetnumber available yet; 691-4/6 (F612/56/75/88/79 XMS), Alexander B28F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds previously CentreWest MA12, 56, 75, 88, 79; 695 (F950 BMS), similar and ex-CentreWest MA50; and 1400 (HSZ 5480), a Wright Nimbus B28F-bodied Renault S75 ex-CentreWest RW80.

Of these new arrivals, 191 has been allocated to Bannockburn depot, 197 to Livingston, and 691-6 to Westfield. 191 is in First Midland Bluebird livery, 197 and G53 RND remain in Leicester colours but with SMT fleetnames added, and while 691-6 entered service in their former owner's red and grey livery with cream SMT fleetnames etc added 691/2 had been repainted into full First SMT livery by late May, and 1400 had also been painted into First SMT livery by late May.

Other recent repaints to record are those of Leyland Tiger 194 into First Midland Bluebird colours and Leyland Olympian 946 into First SMT livery.

First Stop, Renfrew

C77 KLG is a Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH with Duple C46Ft coachwork acquired in April ex-Wilcock, Morley.

Galson, Barvas

There is now some doubt that Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard GSU 830T was purchased last year from MacDonald, Balallan as it is currently reported to be on loan from MacDonald to Lochs, Leurbost.

Although most vehicles in the fleet are now in the new yellow and cream livery, Alexander-bodied Leopards EGB 63/7, 74/6T have yet to have this applied and are still in the red colours carried when acquired.

Another example of this type, GS23 (GLS 271N), has been withdrawn from service.

Gillen, Port Glasgow

Northern Counties-bodied Dodge S46 LAZ 4475 (*D424 NNA*) was sold to PD Travel, Dumbarton in April.

Glenedin, Edinbane

Kathleen Macaskill, trading as Glenedin Coaches, has registered a 'Sunset Tour' which was to operate every Monday to Friday evening between 1 July and 30 September on a circular route between Portree and Kilmaluag.

HAD Coaches, Shotts

Plaxton-bodied Volvo coach P2 HAD was given David Urquhart Travel livery in April.

Harte, Greenock

Due to ongoing problems with Mercedes-Benz Vario R631 EYS delivered last October, it is now unlikely that the second example of this type will be taken. To allow the former to be returned to the manufacturer, a replacement vehicle was obtained from 19 June in the shape of R843 FWW, an Optare MetroRider with B29F bodywork which is to be kept for at least three months and may yet be purchased. It was expected to enter service in full fleet livery with all the usual extras associated with this company.

Highland Country NX

Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards L894/5 (YSF 94/5S) were returned to service recently after having been in storage for some time. Neither carries any fleetname.

Hutchison, Overtown

R91/2 HUS are Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 coaches and R93-5 HUS are Optare Excels, all of which were new in April. Duple 320 C59F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 F776 JYS is now with Goldblade, London.

Kirkpatrick, Banchory FG

Reeve Burgess B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D H34 USO was added to this fleet in May from First Aberdeen, where it was numbered 434. The livery on this bus and E108 JNH has been modified from First Aberdeen ivory and green by the removal of the green and gold stripes and their replacement with the three flashes behind the wheel arches, effectively converting them to the ivory coach livery.

Leask, Lerwick

Plaxton C53F-bodied DAF SB2300DHS585 B885 TPS was sold last year to Hughes DAF (dealer), Gomersal.

Lippen, Johnstone

N780 OGA, a Mercedes-Benz 811D with Marshall B33F bodywork, was written off last December after an accident.

Lochs, Leurbost

The Alexander Y-type-bodied Leyland Leopard from former Scottish Bus Group companies is now the standard 'big bus' in this fleet and WFS 150W is another B53F-bodied PSU3F/4R to join this fleet from Fife Scottish, where it was numbered 150.

A red and cream livery has been adopted to replace the Midland Scottish-inspired blue and cream which was used for some years, and so far Leopards GCS 55V, CAS 516W, LMS 373W, and WFS 140/53W have had the new colours applied. Similar TSJ 87S, BSJ 897, 927T, YCS 91T are still in Clydeside colours; DLS 357V is still in Highland Bus & Coach colours; and WFS 150W remains in Stagecoach livery.

Another Alexander-bodied Leopard, GSU 830T, has recently been on loan from MacDonald, Balallan to assist with a vehicle shortage and is also in red and cream. Mercedes-Benz 811D N231 MUS has been loaned to MacDonald in exchange. This report calls into question the information received last year that this bus had passed from MacDonald to Galson Motors.

Alexander B45F-bodied Ford R1014s RLS 466/7T and Duple C49F-bodied Ford R1114 WST 816V are still on the premises in withdrawn condition.

Lochview, Greenock

Recent additions comprise Bova FHD12.290-C49Ft integral K808 EET ex-Seward, Dalwood in April, and Caetano C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M781 NBA ex-Bullock, Cheadle in May.

Lothian

Six of the recently unveiled new low-floor successor to the Volvo Olympian, which is to be built in Irvine, have been ordered by this company for delivery early next year. The first one is to have Plaxton President bodywork, built at the Northern Counties factory in Wigan, but a decision on the bodywork for the other five is still to be announced. Also one order are 10 two-axle Dennis Tridents, five each with Plaxton President and Alexander ALX400 bodywork.

Further to last month's issue, new Dennis Javelin 79 has Berkhof Radial bodywork, and not Berkhof Axial as stated in the text. This vehicle now sports rear GB plates.

A statement was expected before the end of June to the effect that LRT would be joining the consortium formed by Stagecoach and Edinburgh building firms Morrison Construction and the Miller Group, which is in the running to build and operate the CERT Rapid Transit guided bus route between Edinburgh Airport and the city centre. Although talks have apparently been held with all four consortia on the shortlist for this project, it is understood that the Stagecoach/Miller/Morrison one is the favourite to obtain preferred bidder status for the contract.

Further to last month's issue, the subsidised services which this company offered to run on a commercial basis from the expiry of the current contracts on 26 July comprised the full operation of 13 (Lochend-Blackhall), 38 (Prestonfield-Crewe Toll), 58/59 (Gyle-Ingles Green); evening and Sunday journeys on 2/12 (Niddrie-Broomhouse circle), 7A (Leith Street-Granton), 34/35 (Lochend-Sighthill circle), 41/41A (City Hospital-Blackford/Cramond), 42/46 (Portobello-Cameron Toll circle); Monday to Saturday evening journeys on 22A (Leith Walk-Bernard Street); the Oxgangs-Hillend section of 4 (Bingham-Oxgangs); and early morning journeys on 1/6, 2/12, 3/8, 4, 7/11, 14B, 16, 19A/20, 22, 26A, 27, 28, 31/33, 34/35, 41/41A, 44.

As part of National Green Transport Week in June, LRT promoted National Car Free Day on 16 June by offering anybody who purchased a Day Saver ticket on that day another Day Saver ticket free of charge for use on any other day.

News of the Duple Dominant-bodied Leyland Cubs once in this fleet concerns former 166 (HSC 166X) which recently passed from Careline, Birmingham to Riduna Buses on Alderney, while similar 168 (HSC 168X) is now in the Bromyard Omnibus Company fleet numbered 110 and named *Waverley*, having been re-seated to DP30F using seats from an ex-Jersey 7ft 6in wide Duple Dominant coach.

MacDonald, Back

Van Hool-bodied Volvo coach D605 MVR has continued in service on the Inverness-Ullapool route along with newer example of this type R609 CJS.

MacEwan, Amisfield

R26/8 VSM are the other Van Hool C53F-bodied DAF DE33WSSB3000 coaches delivered recently, while R23/4 VSM are a pair of Crystals B20F-bodied Ford Transits and R27/8 USM are Mercedes-Benz O.814s with UVG DP29F bodywork, all of which were new earlier this year.

MCY 132L (*5519 DD, 788 FBX, FWO 159L*) is a 1972 Leyland Leopard PSU4B/4R with 1988 Willowbrook Warrior B45F body purchased in February ex-Davies, Pencader 170. It also had Willowbrook bodywork when new. Another addition in February was D132 NON, a Freight Rover Sherpa with Carlyle B18F body ex-Bradshaw, Alkrington.

M62 DSJ, a C53F Bova FHD12.330 integral, was sold to Weardale, Stanhope in March.

McGill, Barrhead AA

Dennis Dart 843 (N473 MUS) has been given a mainly white overall advertising livery for Q96 Radio, albeit retaining McGill livery on the front. Conversely, Leyland National 770 (KKG 109W) has reverted to fleet livery in lieu of its Queens Garage car dealership overall advertisement.

McMenemy, Ardrossan

N10 JET is a Dennis Javelin 12SDA with Plaxton C53F coachwork acquired in May ex-Brents, London.

Mairs, Aberdeen FG

Alexander-bodied Renault S56 E110 JNH has been numbered 719 and had its First Aberdeen livery converted to the ivory coach livery as detailed above under Kirkpatrick. Similar E106 JNH is being treated similarly.

The Jonckheere-bodied MAN 16-290 reported on loan last month is registered HSK 855 (*G369 RNH*) and not HSK 856 as previously given.

Marbill, Beith

R590/1 USJ are a pair of Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62s which were new in April.

Merlins Ark, Laurencekirk

The Fettercairn or Laurencekirk to Montrose service was revised from 24 June and now operates betweeen Laurencekirk and Montrose.

Milne, Macduff

This operator, trading as Deveron Coaches, registered a local service between Banff and Macduff from 15 May; presumably subsidised, this runs up to hourly throughout the day on Mondays to Saturdays.

Morrow, Glasgow

While still thought of as a Clydebank operator, John Morrow Coaches is actually based in Glasgow. The latest addition to the fleet is R574 JHS, a Toyota BB50R with what is believed to be the first wide-bodied Caetano Optimo IV coachwork, introduced at Coach & Bus '97, to enter service. It is C22F with reclining seats.

Another vehicle acquired in April is E159 FSO (*FXI 457, E159 FSO, LGL 722, 2367 AT, E194 YGG*), a Volvo B10M-46 with Van Hool C38Ft coachwork last owned by Ewen, Dyce.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Further to last month's issue, Duple-bodied Volvo coach DVS 38 (*HSB 739Y, TSD 148Y*) was also registered WLT 538 before becoming HSB 738Y.

Park, Hamilton

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 LSK 514 was re-registered M43 HSU in January while Neoplan Skyliner J450 NTT was re-registered LSK 827 in April.

New owners for Volvo coaches previously in this fleet include Long, Salsburgh (M981 HNS); Mott, Stoke Mandeville (M573 DSJ); Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow (M827, 983/4 HNS); and Whitelaw, Stonehouse (M730/1 KJU, N804/5 NHS).

Pegasus, Perth

Two vehicles acquired in May from the Western Buses fleet comprised Plaxton Paramount 3500 C51F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH 5796 MX (*B106 REL*) and Devon C23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E499 TSJ, which were numbered 181 and 064 respectively by their previous owner.

Post Office

Several new Ford Mondeo estate car initial allocations from some time ago which have apparently not been recorded until now concern 6760012 (P577 NSC), Kirkwall reserve; 6760013 (P578 NSC) on Isle of Rousay; 6760014 (P579 NSC) on Shieldaig-Torridon; 6760018 (P549 NSC) on Salen-Lagganulva; and 6760019 (P550 NSC) on Tarbert-Skipness.

The experimental Iveco postbus 3750014 (M736 VSC) was sold last year and is now owned by Selwyn Travel, Runcorn.

Prentice, West Calder

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 YSV 607 (*PR 1787, F95 CBD*) was re-registered MBZ 1758 in February before being sold to Mitchell, Plean.

Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow

Recent additions to this fleet comprise 15-seat Mazda E2200 L512 CNR ex-Waddell, Lochwinnoch and Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s M827 HNS (*LSK 499*), M983/4 HNS (*LSK 505/9*) all three of which arrived in May ex-Park, Hamilton.

Rapsons Coaches RN

Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P649 FST has been repainted from National Express to Scottish Citylink livery.

Roadrunner, Gourock

F365 TSX, an Alexander C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D previously in the fleet of Wishart, Friockheim, was acquired around the beginning of April.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

Acquisitions in May comprised Plaxton Supreme C53F-bodied AEC Reliance TKC 833T (*HFF 234, DCH 359T*) ex-Ogden, St Helens; Northern Counties H51/33F-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 OSN 851Y ex-Travel Dundee 51; and Plaxton Paramount 3500 C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R GSU 551 (*A201 MFR*) ex-Viscount Central (Burnley & Pendle) 51.

TKC 833T was purchased in a derelict condition but has been re-certified, fitted with seat belts, and by June was being used on peak hour journeys on SPT service 339 (Irvine Station-Kilwinning Station) in lieu of Lex-bodied Bedford WNH 51W which is currently stored after suffering mechanical failure.

Silver Choice, East Kilbride

Irizar C51F-bodied Scania K113 M25 XSC passed to Head, Lutton in January.

Silver Coach Lines, Edinburgh

Kässbohrer Setra S215HR-C53F F588 YSC (*PSU 621*) passed to Gale, Haslemere in February.

Travel Dundee NX

Northern Counties-bodied Ailsa 51 (OSN 851Y) was sold to Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning in May.

West Coast, Campbeltown

R200 WCM and R300 WCM are two of the anticipated Van Hool C51Ft-bodied DAF DE33WSSB3000 coaches purchased for Citylink work. They arrived in April and are in Citylink colours.

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin M100 WCM was re-registered M165 HSU in February before being sold, allowing Van Hool-bodied DAF SB3000 coach M609 RCP to be re-registered M100 WCM at that time. Plaxton-bodied Bedford YLQ RSB 7S was re-registered FSU 57S some time ago.

Caetano C21F-bodied Toyota HDB30R H165 EJU was sold to Kirkby (dealer), Anston in March.

Western ST

975/9 (A950/99 SYE), 976 (A76 THX), 977 (A866 SUL), and 978 (A645 THV) are further Leyland Titans acquired from Stagecoach East London in May. All are TNLXB2RRs with Leyland H44/24D bodywork and were numbered T950/99, 1076, 866, 1045 by their previous owner.

Open top Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Fleetline 834 (XSJ 656T) has been lettered appropriately for a new summer season venture in the Dunoon area incorporating a heritage tour of the town and an hourly service to the Younger Botanic Gardens at Benmore.

Devon C23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D 064 (E499 TSJ) and Plaxton C51F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH 181 (5796 MX, *B106 REL*) were sold to Pegasus, Perth in May while former AA Buses Leyland National NL116AL11/1R-B52F 764 (LSJ 871W) and Park Royal H43/32F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R 802 (WVM 884S) were sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet at that time. Dormobile B25F-bodied Dodge S46 296 (E646 DCK) has been donated to Dennistoun Support Services.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3/3R HCS 793N, new to Western SMT in 1975 as L2508, was sold recently by Davies, Pencader to a Mr Eddisford of Blaydon on Tyne for conversion into a mobile home for holidays, and semi-preservation.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Several coaches were acquired in April comprising Jonckheere C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62s M730/1 KJU ex-Park, Hamilton; similar C53F-bodied N804/5 NHS also ex-Park; and Plaxton C53F-bodied B10M-62 P228 AUT which was last used by Western Buses. Plaxton C50F-bodied B10M-62s N227-9 HWX ex-Wallace Arnold Coaches followed in May. P228 AUT carries Trafalgar fleetnames. A new Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 is expected shortly, and is to be registered R17 BUS.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s M625 FNS, N814/9 NHS were all sold to Yeates (dealer), Loughborough last November with M625 FNS subsequently passing to Winson, Loughborough.

Wilson, Carnwath

It is reported that no less than 26 Dodge/Renault minibuses were acquired by this operator in April, but further details are not available at present.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 KAZ 4551 (*A155 XLG, FSU 804, A514 FNR*) was re-registered SV 2923 in April.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60s G342 FFX and G328 PEW passed to Wellington & Horswill, Kingsbridge at the end of last year while Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D NDS 837Y went to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in April.

From 22 June the service between Kirkintilloch and Canniesburn Toll was extended to Maryhill Shopping Centre via Acre Road.

Wishart, Friockheim NX

Bowing to the pressure of public demand, the previously intimated decision to report this operator's business under the parent Travel Dundee company has now been reversed!

In addition to the Optare Solo expected, another new vehicle to join the fleet is R894 TSR, a Mercedes-Benz 412D with Aitken C16F coachwork which had arrived by May.

F365 TSX, an Alexander C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D which has been in reserve since the beginning of the year, was sold to Roadrunner, Gourock around the end of April.

Two other vehicles for sale are Made to Measure C16F-bodied Ford Transit G85 SVM and H955 LOC, a Mercedes-Benz 408D with C15F bodywork converted by Jordan of Stourport — this vehicle was C16F until fitted with seatbelts when inward facing seats were turned to face the front.

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J. Anderson, Bluebird Buses, R. Clark, G. Cook, J. Dunne, Edinburgh City Council, First Glasgow, Harte Bus Company, S. Hulse, N. Jones, S. Little, G. Munro, PSV Circle, Shuttle Buses, J. Sinclair, R. Spencer, Stagecoach Glasgow, Wacton Coach Sales & Services, R. Walter, and Western Buses have contributed items of news this month and their assistance is greatly appreciated.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- FG — FirstGroup
- NX — National Express Group
- RN — Rapsons
- ST — Stagecoach
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Opposite and left: **Two views of vehicles fron the Nicolson, Borve fleet, taken in Portree bus station. Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver R59 DJS was delivered recently, but Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer P817 EST entered service early in 1997, having been stored by Nicolson unregistered since 1994!** BOTH: MIKE MATTHEWS

Reports on vehicles in Northern Ireland only should be sent, please, to: **G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue, Belfast BT6 9RG**, and those for the Irish Republic to: **John A. Doherty, 21 Whitebeam Avenue, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14.**

IRISH MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

Bristol RELL/Alexander 2431 (WOI 2431) is reinstated at Antrim, ex-reserve, having previously served in the Citybus fleet. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright 886 (AAZ 8886) is returned to service at Downpatrick, following accident repairs.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1334 (RXI 3334) is withdrawn for extensive repair, following a controlled explosion as a result of a bomb hoax.

Sole ex-military Leyland Tiger 540 (HAZ 3540) is now a driver-trainer once more, having recently seen service in Antrim.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1161 (MXI 3161) is now back in fleet livery, the last of seven all-over advertising vehicles promoting the Ulsterbus smoke-free policy.

Citybus

Bristol RELL/Alexander 2528 (XOI 2528) is returned to service following accident repairs.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-type 2671 (VXI 2671) is the latest vehicle to receive 'super-rear' advertising , this time for 'Herbal Essence'. Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 2618 (NXI 4618), previously advertising Ulster Museum's Dinosaur Exhibition. now advertises Citybus 'Get up and Go' promotions. There must be a message there for somebody.

Flexibus Renault Master 22 (TAZ 3731) has passed to Beattie, Hillsborough (dealer), for scrapping.

Dublin Bus

First of the 1998 order for 60 Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Volvo Olympians in CitySwift livery are RV386-9 (98 D 20386-9) at Summerhill. Further deliveries are expected to be allocated as follows: Conyngham Road RV390-9, Clontarf RV400-7/22-31, Phibsborough RV408-11, Donnybrook RV422-31/6-45 and Summerhill RV432-5.

Bombardier KD293 (293 OZU) is withdrawn at Conyngham Road, being replaced by KD153 from Summerhill (ex- Donnybrook). Olympian RA190 at Donnybrook is to join RH49, as an all-over advertisement for Heinz Weight Watchers.

Remaining GAC KC type are allocated as follows:

Conyngham Road: KC10-5/7, 27, 48-52, 98-100/76/91
Summerhill: KC28-39, 116-9
Clontarf: KC40-7, 73-9, 91, 110-5/21/37-9/73/95-8
Donnybrook: KC56/8, 60-1/3-9, 71-2, 81-90/2/4-5, 168/99-202

Bus Eireann

New Scania L94/Irizar Centurys at Broadstone for use on daily Dublin-Galway service, running each hour, are SI14-20 (98 D 37145/50/2, 41101/8/14/9).

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton PL80/1 have been transferred back to Broadstone from Cork. The two Van Hool-bodied Leyland Worldmasters, WVH13, 22 (HZD 593/6), in use on Galway-based tours in use until withdrawal in 1996, are due to pass into preservation. One will go to the Transport Museum Society of Ireland, Howth, whilst the other will be exported to Belgium to become an exhibit at the Van Hool Museum.

Newly acquired ex-Singapore Bus Service at Limerick are Volvo B57 school buses VS324/5 (84 D 7113/4). Remaining KC -types are allocated as follows:

Galway: KC7, 8, 101/3-8
Waterford: KC96, 109/74/5
Cork: KC5, 124-136/40-55/7-67/9-72
Limerick: KC178-90/2-4

Leyland Atlanteans DF454 in Limerick and DF795 in Cork are in use this year on daily open-top tour work.

IRISH INDEPENDENTS

Chambers, Moneymore

The operations and fleet of Quinn, Coagh were acquired in June. Volvo B58/Duple OIB 8587 (*PWN 759R, 898 FCY, ACK 7R*) has now passed to Lally, Galway, following only a short stay in this fleet.

Eurocoach, Dungannon

Recent aditions are ex-Grampian Volvo B10M-61/Jonckheere C46Ft, CLZ 2766 (*D904 BRS, TRS 333, D330 VVV*), and ex-Wings, Uxbridge Optare StarRider C29F, M597 DBY (*WLT 852, M928 TYG*)

Gemini, Lurgan

Ford R1114/Plaxton C47F, OIB 1330 (*UFW 851W*) has passed to Wharton, Crossdoney and registered 81 CN 338.

Lakeland Tours, Lisbellaw

Recently acquired from Lowland Omnibuses is L521 EHD, a DAF MB230/Van Hool C51Ft

Lally, Galway

Open-top Bristol VRT 68 G 811 is in use on the historic Galway tour.

Londonderry & Lough Swilly

Leyland Leopard/Alexander 399 (GCS 64V) is now registered 80 DL 704, whilst Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 408 (WLT 956, *A176 UGB*) is now 84 DL 2174.

Lyons, Londonderry

First vehicle for this new operator is ex-Wing, Sleaford Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton C53F, L299 KKW.

Northern Coaches, Newtownabbey

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Recently acquired ex-Moley, Crossmaglen is B755 PHP, a Bova EL26/581/ Duple Calypso C53F.

Above right: **Curiously describing itself as a vintage bus, is ex-LFS 296F, Lally of Galway's Bristol VRTLL6G, 68 G 811 in Eyre Square, Galway.** CHRISTINA CURTIS

Right: **Two GAC KC-class vehicles have been painted in AirLink livery to deputise for the Alexander-bodied DAF SB220s normally used; second of the two is KC117.** CHRISTINA CURTIS

Below right: **Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Volvo Olympian RV389 (98 D 20389) is one of this year's deliveries. It is seen at Eden Quay, Dublin.**

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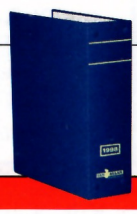

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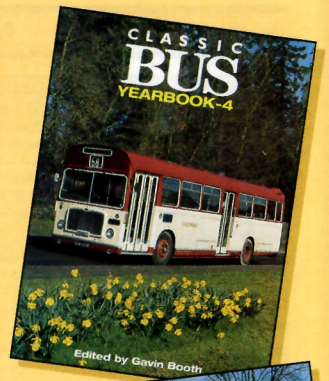

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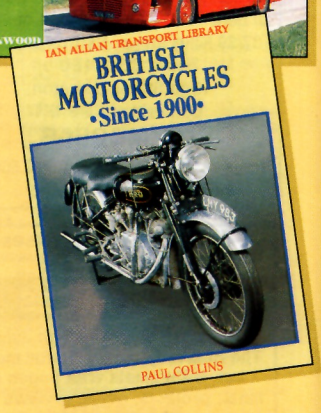

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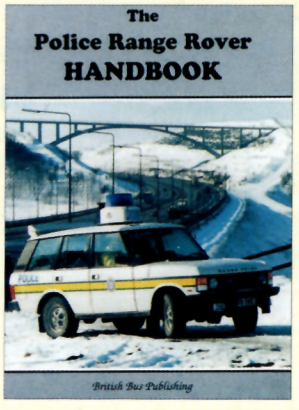

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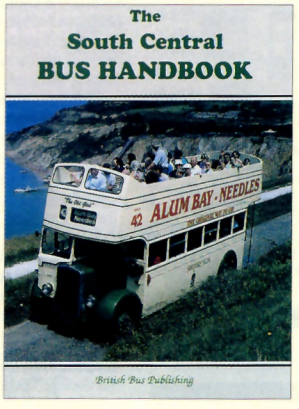

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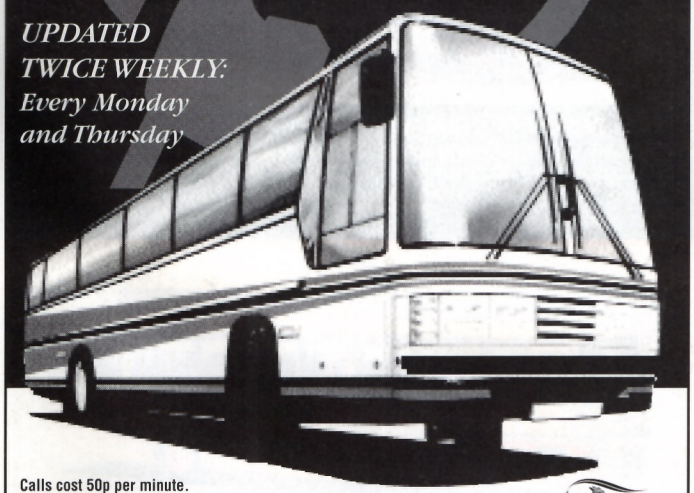

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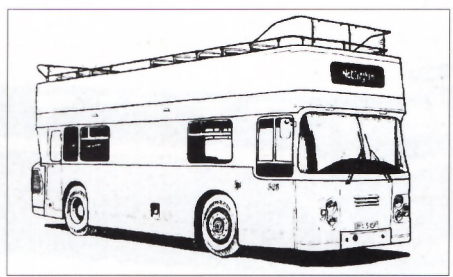

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24703 Manchester MCW Atlantean PLYMOUTH

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24311 B.E.T. WESTERN WELSH

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18502 Bristol VRII Open Top EASTERN COUNTIES

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21902 Bedford TK COURAGE

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15710 Plaxton Panorama WALLACE ARNOLD

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25301 AEC Duple Half Cab Coach EAST YORKSHIRE

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